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THE WORKS

OF

JOHN HOWE, M.A.

THE WORKS

OF

JOHN HOWE, M.A.,

SOMETIME FELLOW OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXON.

VOLUME V.

CONTAINING THE TREATISES

ON DIVINE PRESCIENCE AND THE TRINITY;
LETTER CONCERNING STILLINGFLEET'S SERMON;
THREE DISCOURSES ON PUBLIC OCCASIONS,
ETC., ETC., ETC.

LONDON:
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THE

RECONCILABLENESS OF GOD'S PRESCIENCE

OF THE

SINS OF MEN

WITH THE

WISDOM AND SINCERITY OF HIS COUNSELS, EXHORTATIONS, AND WHATSOEVER OTHER MEANS HE USES TO PREVENT THEM,

IN

A LETTER TO THE HON. ROBERT BOYLE, ESQ.,

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A POSTSCRIPT IN DEFENCE OF THE SAID LETTER.

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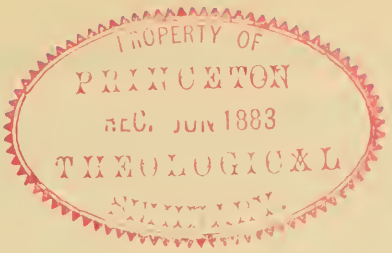

THE

RECONCILABLENESS OF GOD'S PRESCIENCE,

ETC.

Sir,—The veneration I have long had for your name could not permit me to apprehend less obligation than that of a law, in your recommending to me this subject. For within the whole compass of intellectual employment and affairs, none but who are so unhappy as not at all to know you, would dispute your right to prescribe and give law.

And taking a nearer view of the province you have assigned me, I must esteem it alike both disingenuous and undutiful wholly to have refused it. For the less you could think it possible to me to perform in it, the more I might perceive of kindness allaying the authority of the imposition; and have the apprehension the more obvious to me, that you rather designed in it mine own advantage, than that you reckoned the cause could receive any by my undertaking it.

The doubt, I well know, was mentioned by you as other men's, and not your own,—whose clear mind and diligent inquiry leave you little liable to be encumbered with greater difficulties.

Wherefore that I so soon divert from you, and no more allow these papers to express any regard unto you till the shutting of the discourse, is only a seeming disrespect or indecorum, put in the stead of a real one. For after you

have given them the countenance, as to let it be understood you gave the first rise and occasion to the business and design of them; I had little reason to slur that stamp put upon them, by adding to their (enough other) faults, that of making them guilty of so great a misdemeanour and impertinency as to continue a discourse of this length, to one that hath so little leisure or occasion to attend to anything can be said by them.

Section I.

What there is of difficulty in this matter I cannot pretend to set down in those most apt expressions wherein it was represented to me, and must therefore endeavour to supply a bad memory out of a worse invention.

So much appears very obvious: that, ascribing to the ever-blessed God, among the other attributes which we take to belong to an every way perfect Being, a knowledge so perfect as shall admit of no possible accession or increase, and consequently the prescience of all future events,—as whereof we doubt him not to have the distinct knowledge, when they shall have actually come to pass,—since many of those events are the sinful actions or omissions of men, which he earnestly counsels and warns them against, this matter of doubt cannot but arise hereupon, namely:

How it can stand with the wisdom and sincerity, which our own thoughts do by the earliest anticipation challenge to that ever-happy Being, to use these, or any other means, with a visible design to prevent that, which, in the meantime appears to that all-seeing eye, sure to come to pass.

So that, by this representation of the case, there seem to be committed together:—either *first*, God's wisdom with this part of his knowledge; for we judge it not to consist with the wisdom of a man, to design and pursue an end which he foreknows he shall never attain: or *secondly*, the same foreknowledge with his sincerity and uprightness, that he seems intent upon an end which indeed he intends not.

The matter then comes shortly to this sum: either the

holy God seriously intends the prevention of such foreseen sinful actions and omissions, or he doth not intend it. If he do, his wisdom seems liable to be impleaded, as above: if he do not, his uprightness and truth.

My purpose is not, in treating of this affair, to move a dispute concerning the fitness of the words 'prescience' or 'foreknowledge,' or to trouble this discourse with notions I understand not, of the indivisibility and unsuccessiveness of eternal duration, whence it would be collected there can be no such thing as first or second, fore or after knowledge in that duration; but be contented to speak as I can understand and be understood: that is, to call that foreknowledge which is the knowledge of somewhat that as yet is not, but that shall sometime come to pass. For it were a mere piece of legerdemain, only to amuse inquirers whom one would pretend to satisfy: or to fly to a cloud for refuge from the force of an argument, and avoid an occurring difficulty by the present reliefless shift of involving oneself in greater.

Nor shall I design to myself so large a field as a *tractate* concerning the 'Divine Prescience,' so as to be obliged to discourse particularly whatsoever may be thought to belong to that theological topic; but confine the discourse to my enjoined subject, and offer only such considerations as may some way tend to expedite or alleviate the present difficulty.

Section II.

It were one of the greatest injuries to religion, a subversion indeed of its very foundations,—and than by doing which we could not more highly gratify atheistical minds,—instead and under pretence of ascribing perfections to the nature of God, to ascribe to it inconsistencies, or to give a self-repugnant notion of that adorable Being, the parts whereof should justle and not accord with one another. And yet equal care is to be taken, lest while we endeavour to frame a consistent notion of God, we reject from it anything that is truly a per-

fection, and so give a maimed one; whereby we should undo our own design, and by our over-much caution to make our conception of him agree with itself, make it disagree to him; for to an absolutely perfect Being, no other can agree than that, which not only is not made up of contradictions, but which also comprehends in it all real perfections, either explicitly, or which leaves room for all by not positively *excluding* any of them; which to do, and afterward to assign that as the proper notion of God, were itself the greatest contradiction. We need therefore to be very wary, lest we pronounce too hastily concerning anything which to our most sedate thoughts appears simply a perfection in itself, that it carries with it a repugnancy to somewhat else necessary to be ascribed to him.

We are first to suspect—as there is greatest cause—and inquire, whether the ail be not wholly in our own *minds;* which in this and such like cases we certainly shall, upon due reflection, find labouring under the natural defect of that incomprehensive narrowness, that is in some degree unavoidably followed with confusion and indistinctness of thoughts: and may perhaps find cause to accuse them of the more culpable evils, both of slothfulness that withholds them from doing what they can, and self-conceit by which they imagine to themselves an ability of doing what they cannot.

It cannot be unobserved by them that have made *themselves* any part of their own study, that it is very incident to our minds to grasp at more than they can compass; and then, through their own scantiness (like the little hand of a child) to throw away one thing that hath pleased us, to make room for another, because we cannot comprehend both together.

It is not strange that our so straitly limited understandings should not be able to lodge commodiously the immense perfections of a Deity; so as to allow them liberty to spread themselves in our thoughts in their entire proportions. And because we cannot, we complain, when we feel ourselves a

little pinched, that the things will not consist; when the matter is, that we have unduly crowded and huddled them up together in our incomprehensive minds, that have not distinctly conceived them.

And though this consideration should not be used for the protection of an usurped liberty of fastening upon God, arbitrarily and at random, what we please—as indeed what so gross absurdity might not any one give shelter to by such a misapplication of it?—we ought yet to think it seasonably applied, when we find ourselves urged with difficulties on one hand and the other, and apprehend it hard, with clearness and satisfaction to ascribe to God what we also find it not easy not to ascribe.

Nor would it be less unfit to apply it for the patronage of that slothfulness wherein our discouraged minds are sometimes too prone to indulge themselves: to which purpose I remember somewhat very apposite in Minucius Felix,—that many, through the mere tediousness of finding out the truth, do rather by a mean succumbency yield to the first specious show of any opinion whatsoever, than be at the trouble, by a pertinacious diligence, of applying themselves to a thorough search.

Though the comprehension of our minds be not infinite, it might be extended much further than usually it is, if we would allow ourselves with patient diligence to consider things at leisure, and so as gradually to stretch and enlarge our own understandings. Many things have carried the appearance of contradiction and inconsistency to the first view of our straitened minds, which afterwards we have, upon repeated consideration and endeavour, found room for, and been able to make fairly accord and lodge together.

Especially we should take heed lest it be excluded by overmuch conceitedness and a self-arrogating pride, that disdains to be thought not able to see through everything by the first and slightest glance of a haughty eye; and peremptorily determines *that* to be unintelligible, that an arrogant, unin-

structed mind hath only not humility enough to acknowledge difficult to be understood; whence it is too possible some may be over-prone to detract from God what really belongs to him, lest anything should seem detracted from themselves, and impute imperfection to him rather than confess their own; and may be so over-ascribing to themselves as to reckon it a disparagement not to be endured, to seem a little puzzled for the present; to be put to pause, and draw breath a while, and look into the matter again and again: which if their humility and patience would enable them to do, it is not likely that the Author of our faculties would be unassisting to them in those our inquiries which concern our duty towards himself.

For though in matters of mere speculation we may be encountered with difficulties, whereof perhaps no mortal can ever be able to find out the solution—which is no great prejudice, and may be gainful and instructive to us—yet as to what concerns the object of our religion, it is to be hoped we are not left in unextricable entanglements; nor should think we are, till we have made utmost trial: the design being not to gratify our curiosity, but to relieve ourselves of uncomfortable doubtfulness in the matter of our worship, and, in a dutiful zeal towards the blessed object thereof, to vindicate it against the cavils of ill-minded men.

Section III.

But if the unsuccessfulness of often-repeated endeavours make us despair of being able, with so full satisfaction, to reconcile some things which we have thought were to be attributed to God; it will be some relief to us, if we find the things about which the doubt lies are not of the same order, nor such as with equal evidence and necessity are to be affirmed of him.

And when we make a comparison, we may find ourselves at a certainty concerning those his attributes which most commonly, and at the first view, approve themselves to every man's understanding.

Among which we little hesitate, as we are most concerned not to do, about those which carry with them the import of *moral goodness,* and which render the object of our religion at once both most venerable and lovely; for none do more naturally obtain for common notions concerning him, so as even to prevent ratiocination or argument, with whomsoever the apprehension of his existence hath place.

Every man's mind, it being once acknowledged that there is a God, refuses to conceive otherwise of him than that he is holy, just, merciful, true, etc.; and rejects with abhorrency the notion of an impure, unrighteous, cruel, deceitful Deity.

As for those that, by a long train of our own more uncertain and lubricous reasonings, we endeavour to deduce; if we find ourselves constrained anywhere to admit a diffidence, it were rather to be placed here. For it is at first sight evident, since God is most certainly willing to be known of them that are sincerely willing to know him, that what is a natural impression, stamped by his own hand on every man's mind, hath more of absolute certainty than what depends on metaphysical subtlety; whereof so very few are capable, and whereby divers pretenders thereto do so frequently, and perhaps very dangerously, ensnare themselves. And it is of far greater importance such a notion of God be entertained as whereby he may be rendered amiable, and an inviting object of love—the very life and soul of all religion—than such as shall be the result and entertainment only of scholastic wit.

Yet also since it is very manifest that man is now become a degenerate creature and in an apostasy from God, he is very little to be trusted with the framing his own idea of Him; being certainly most unapt to allow anything a place in it that would have an unfavourable aspect upon his vicious inclinations and his guilty state. And the contagion of man's sinfulness having spread itself as far as he hath propagated his own nature, so as no notion in his mind can be more common than the perversion and distemper of his mind

itself, the possibility and danger is very obvious, of mistaking a dictate of depraved nature for an authentic *common notion.* And though these are not impossible to be distinguished, and in some cases very easy,—as when men find it imposed unavoidably upon them, to apprehend and acknowledge some things which they are very unwilling should be true, in which case their sentiments have the same right to be believed, as the testimony of an enemy on the opposite party's behalf,—we have yet no reason to neglect any other means whereby we may be more certainly directed how to conceive of God, or what we are to attribute to him and what not.

Section IV.

Nor can we be at a greater certainty than in admitting such things to belong to the blessed God as he plainly affirms of himself; or any way, by his word, evidently discovers to belong to him. For "as none knows the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him; so the things of God are known to none but the Spirit of God."[1]

Taking therefore his own word for our measure in the present case—which I will suppose the reader not to think it unreasonable to appeal to; and what is here said is intended only for those that have *that* estimate of the writings wont to go under that name—what it says of him, much more what it proves, will no doubt be admitted for certain truth: though if it say such things as, to us, seem not so manifestly to agree with one another, our endeavour must be the more earnest and solicitous, as also it ought to be the more modest, to discuss and remove the ἐναντιοφανές, or whatsoever semblance of disagreement.

And whosoever concern themselves to peruse that venerable book will find everywhere on the one hand, proclaimed and magnified in it, what our own minds cannot but have been prepossessed of,—the most exquisite *wisdom* of God; whereby

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 11.

he forms and contrives the methods of all his dispensations, and disposes them in the aptest subserviency to his own great and most important ends: that "all his ways are judgment;"[1] and that he "worketh all things according to the counsel of his will."[2] In sum, that all wisdom is appropriated to him; that he is celebrated in the style of "God, only wise."[3] Nor are we therefore to think it strange, if, many times, we are not able to trace him out or understand the reason of everything he thinks fit to do. For the paths of the more perfect wisdom must therefore be expected to be the more abstruse and remoter from common apprehension.

How often do we find ourselves so far outgone by wise and designing *men*, as that we are sometimes constrained to confess and admire their great prudence and conduct (when they have effected their purposes) in those managements which we have before beheld either with silent ignorance or perhaps not without censure. How much less should the wisest of men regret it, to find all their conjectures exceeded by the infinite wisdom: in the contemplation whereof we find the great apostle, notwithstanding the vast capacity of his Divinely enlightened understanding, exclaiming in a transport, "O the depths!"[4]

And when our eyes tell us, from so manifest stupendous effects, how far we are exceeded by him in power, it were reasonable to expect he should surpass us proportionably in the contrivances of his wisdom also.

And whereas the conjunction is rare among men, of deep political wisdom with integrity and strict righteousness; this proceeds from the imperfection and insufficiency of the former in great part; that they know not how to compass their designs, unless often by supplying their want of wisdom out of the spoil and violation of their justice and honesty. Otherwise these are things not so altogether out of credit in the world, but that men would rather accomplish their purposes by fair and unexceptionable means, if they could tell how; only the respect and deference they have for

[1] Deut. xxxii. 4. [2] Eph. i. 11. [3] Rom. xvi. 27. [4] Rom. xi. 33.

them is less than what they bear to their own interests and ends.

But besides the natural inflexible rectitude of the Divine will, we are secured, from his all-sufficiency, that we shall never be fraudulently imposed upon by any of his declarations unto the children of men. For there is nothing to be gained by it: and we cannot conceive what inducement he should have to make use of any so mean and pitiful shifts for the governing of his creatures, whom he spontaneously raised out of nothing and hath so perfectly within his power.

Unless we should be so most intolerably injurious to him as to imagine a worse thing of him than we would of the worst of men,—that he loved falsehood for its own sake: and *that* against his so constantly professed detestation of it, the declared repugnancy of it to his nature, and the even tenour of his word—everywhere agreeing with itself herein —so often describing him by that property, "God that cannot lie;" and, with the same positiveness, avowing his own uprightness, and requiring it; expressing his great love to it, and the high delight he takes to find it in his intelligent creatures. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright."[1]

Nor is his testimony the less to be regarded, for that it is laudatory, and of himself. For we are to consider the prerogative of him that testifies, and that if he were not αὐτόπιστος, he were not God: besides, that his giving us this or any representation of himself (to whom it were enough to enjoy his own perfections) is a *vouchsafement*, and done of mere grace and favour to us; that we may by it be indueed to place with satisfaction our unsuspicious trust and confidence in him: as also that he says in all this no other thing of himself than what our own minds, considering him as God, must acknowledge most worthy of him, and agreeing to him with the most apparent necessity.

This part, therefore, of the idea of God hath so firm a

[1] Psalm xi. 7.

foundation, both in the natural complexion of our own minds and the report which his word makes of him, that on this hand we are hemmed in as by a wall of adamant; and cannot have the thought of defending his *prescience* by intrenching upon his wisdom and truth, without offering the highest violence both to him and ourselves.

Section V.

On the other hand also, as it cannot but seem to us a higher perfection to know all things at once than gradually to arrive to the knowledge of one thing after another, and so proceed from the ignorance of some things to the knowledge of them; and that nothing is more certain, than that all possible perfection must agree to God: so we find his own word asserting to him that most perfect knowledge which seems to exclude the possibility of increase; or that anything should *succeed* into his knowledge. For how plainly is it affirmed of him, that he "knows all things!" And even concerning such future things as about which our present inquiry is conversant, the affirmation is express and positive, "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done."[1]

Nor is the affirmation naked and unfortified. For in the same sacred records we have the same thing both affirmed and proved: inasmuch as we find, in a great part thereof, are contained things foretold by most express prophecy, unto which the events recorded in other parts, and many of them in other unquestioned writings besides, have so punctually corresponded as to leave no place for doubt or cavil. Instances are so plain and well known that they need not be mentioned. And, surely, what was so expressly foretold, could not but have been foreknown.

It seems then an attempt also equally hopeless and unrelieving as it were adventurous and bold, to offer at the protection of his wisdom and sincerity by assaulting his

[1] Isa. xlvi. 9, 10, with chap. xli. 22, 23.

prescience, or certain foreknowledge of whatsoever shall come to pass.

And that their defence is not to be attempted this way will further most evidently appear from hence,—that it is not impossible to assign particular instances of some or other most confessedly wicked actions, against which God had directed those ordinary means of counselling and dehorting men, and which yet it is most certain he did foreknow they would do: as, though it was so punctually determined even[1] to a day, and was, though not so punctually,[2] foretold unto Abraham, how long, from that time,[3] his seed should be strangers in a land that was not theirs; yet how frequent are the counsels and warnings sent to Pharaoh, to dismiss them sooner; yea, how often are Moses and Aaron directed to claim their liberty and exhort Pharaoh to let them go, and at the same time told[4] he should not hearken to them! Nor indeed is it more seldom said, that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, lest he should; though it may be a doubt whether those passages be truly translated. For the gentler meaning of the Hebrew idiom being well known, it would seem more agreeable to the text to have expressed only the intended sense than to have strained a word to the very utmost of its literal import, and manifestly beyond what was intended.

After the like manner is the prophet Ezekiel sent to the revolted Israelites, and directed to speak to them with God's own words, the sum and purport whereof was to warn and dehort them from their wicked ways, "lest they should die;" when, as yet, it is plainly told him, "But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me."[5]

Unto which same purpose it is more pertinent than necessary to be added, that our Saviour's own plain assertions

[1] Exod. xii. 41. [2] Gen. xv. 3.

[3] What there is of difficulty or doubt about this prophecy, see fully cleared in the late Letter to the Deist.

[4] Exod. iv., etc. [5] Ezek. iii. 4.

that he was the Son of God, the many miracles by which he confirmed it, and his frequent exhortations to the Jews to believe in him thereupon, had a manifest tendency to make him be known and believed to be so, and consequently to prevent that most horrid act of his crucifixion,—for it is said, and the matter speaks itself, that, "if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory,"[1]—notwithstanding that it was a thing which God's hand and counsel had determined before to be done:[2] that is, foreseeing wicked hands would be prompted and ready for this tragic enterprise, his sovereign power and wise counsel concurred with his foreknowledge; so only and not with less latitude to define or determine the *bounds* and *limits* of that malignity, than to let it proceed unto this execution; and to deliver him up —not by any formal resignation or surrender, as we well know, but permitting him—thereunto, though the same phrase of "delivering him" hath elsewhere another notion, of *assigning* or *appointing* him to be a propitiation for the sins of men, by dying; which was done by mutual agreement between both the parties, him that was to propitiate and him who was to be propitiated; in which respect our Saviour is also said to have given himself for the same purpose,[3] which purpose it was determined not to hinder prepared hands to execute in this way.

Now if it did appear but in one single instance only, that the blessed God did foreknow and dehort from the same act, it will be plainly consequent that his warnings and dehortations from wicked actions in the general can with no pretence be alleged as a proof against his universal prescience. For if the argument, 'He dehorted from the doing such an action, therefore he did not foreknow it,'—would be able to conclude anything, it must be of sufficient force to conclude universally; which it cannot do, if but a single instance can be given wherein it is apparent he did both dehort and foreknow. It can only pretend to raise the doubt which we have in hand to discuss, how fitly, and with what

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 8. [2] Acts iv. 28. [3] Tit. ii. 14.

wisdom and sincerity, he can be understood to interpose his counsels and monitions in such a case.

Section VI.

Wherefore nothing remains, but to consider how these may be reconciled, and made appear to be no way inconsistent with one another.

Nor are we to apprehend herein so great a difficulty as it were to reconcile his irresistible predeterminative concurrence to all actions of the creature, even those that are in themselves most malignantly wicked, with the wisdom and righteousness of his laws against them, and severest punishments of them according to those laws.

Which sentiments must, I conceive, to any impartial understanding, leave it no way sufficiently explicable how the influence and concurrence the holy God hath to the worst of actions is to be distinguished from that which he affords to the best;—wherein such inherently evil actions are less to be imputed to him who forbids them, than to the malicious tempter who prompts to them, or the actor that does them, or wherein not a great deal more;—and leave it undeniable, that the matter of all his laws, in reference to all *such* actions that ever have been done in the world, was a simple and most strictly natural impossibility: nothing being more apparently so than either not to do an action whereto the agent is determined by an infinite power, or to separate the malignity thereof from an intrinsically evil action; and that this natural *impossibility* of not sinning was the ineluctable fate of his, at first, innocent creatures; who also, as the case is to be conceived of with the angels that kept not their first station, must be understood irreversibly condemned to the suffering of eternal punishment for the not doing of what it was, upon these terms, so absolutely impossible to them to avoid.

Section VII.

This too hard province the present design pretends not to intermeddle in, as being neither apprehended manageable

for those briefly mentioned considerations, and many more that are wont to be insisted on in this argument: nor indeed at all necessary; for though many considerations have been with great subtlety alleged and urged to this purpose, by former and some modern writers, which it is beside the design of these papers severally to discuss; these two, which seem the most importunate and enforcing, will, I conceive, be found of little force, and then, the less strength which is in others, will be nothing formidable; namely,—

That it necessarily belongs to the Original and Fountain Being, to be the first cause of whatsoever being; and consequently, that what there is of positive being in any the most wicked action must principally owe itself to the determinative productive influence of this first and sovereign Cause. Otherwise it would seem there were some being, that were neither *primum* nor *à primo.*

And again—which we are more concerned to consider, because it more concerns our present subject—that it were otherwise impossible God should foreknow the sinful actions of men,—many whereof, as hath been observed, he hath foretold,—if their futurition were a mere contingency and depended on the uncertain will of the subordinate agent, not determined by the Supreme.

But *neither* of these seem able to infer the dismal conclusion of God's concurring by a *determinative* influence unto wicked actions.

Not the *former;* for it may well be thought sufficiently to salve the rights and privileges of the First Cause, to assert that no action can be done but by a power *derived* from it; which, in reference to forbidden actions, intelligent creatures may use or not use as they please, without over-asserting that they must be irresistibly determined also, even to the worst of actions done by them: besides, that it seems infinitely to detract from the perfection of the ever-blessed God, to affirm he was not able to make a creature of such a nature as, being continually sustained by him and supplied with power every moment suitable to its nature, should be capable of acting,

unless whatsoever he thus *enables*, he *determine*—that is, for it can mean no less thing, *impel*—it to do also.

And except it were affirmed impossible to God to have made such a creature—that is, that it implied a contradiction, which certainly can never be proved—there is no imaginable pretence why it should not be admitted he hath done it: rather than so fatally expose the wisdom, goodness, and righteousness of God, by supposing him to have made laws for his reasonable creatures, impossible, through his own irresistible counteraction, to be observed; and afterwards to express himself displeased, and adjudge his creatures to eternal punishments, for not observing them.

I am not altogether ignorant what attempts have been made to prove it impossible; nor again, what hath been done to manifest the vanity of those attempts. But I must confess a greater disposition to wonder that ever such a thing should be disputed, than dispute so plain a case; and that a matter whereupon all moral government depends, both human and Divine, should not have been determined at the first sight.

It is not hard for a good wit to have somewhat to say for anything. But to dispute against the common sense of mankind, we know beforehand is but to trifle; as the essay to prove the impossibility of local motion.

The notion of the goodness and righteousness of God, methinks, should stick so close to our minds and create such a sense in our souls, as should be infinitely dearer to us than all our senses and powers; and that we should rather choose to have our sight, hearing, and motive power, or what not besides, disputed or even torn away from us, than ever suffer ourselves to be disputed into a belief that the holy and good God should irresistibly determine the wills of men to, and punish, the same thing. Nor is it difficult to urge more puzzling sophisms against the former, than for this latter.

But the efforts of a sophistical wit against sense, and more against the sense of our souls, and most of all against the entire sum and substance of all morality and religion at once,

are but like the attempt to batter a wall of brass with straws and feathers.

Nor is the assault, on this part, more feeble and impotent than the defence is wont to be of the other. For I would appeal to the quick refined sense of any sober and pious mind after serious, inward consultation with itself,—being closely urged with the horror of so black a conception of God, that he should be supposed irresistibly to determine the will of a man to the hatred of his own most blessed self, and then to exact severest punishments for the offence done,—what relief it would now be to it, to be only taught to reply, 'That man is under the law, and God above it!'

A defence that doubles the force of the assault. What! that God should make a law, and necessitate the violation of it? and yet also punish that violation? and this be thought a sufficient salvo, that himself is not subject to any law? Will a quick-scented, tender spirit, wounded by so unsufferable indignity offered to the holy God, be any whit eased or relieved by the thin sophistry of only a collusive ambiguity in the word *law?* which sometimes signifies the *declared pleasure* of a ruler to a subject, in which sense any eye can see God can be under no law, having no superior: but not seldom also, an *habitual fixed principle and rule of acting* after one steady tenour; in which sense how manifest is it, that the perfect rectitude of God's own holy gracious nature is an eternal law to him, infinitely more stable and immutable than the ordinances of day and night!

Or what relief is there in that dream of the supposed possibility of God's making a reasonable creature with an innocent aversion to himself? For what can be supposed more repugnant? Or what more impertinent? If innocent, how were it punishable? A law already made in the case, how can it be innocent?

But whatsoever strength there may be in arguments and replies, to and fro, in this matter, that which hath too apparently had greatest actual efficacy with many, hath been the authority and name of this or that man of reputation; and

the force of that art of imputing a doctrine, already under a prejudicial doom, to some or other ill-reputed former writer.

I profess not to be skilled in the use of that sort of weapons. And what reputation ought to be of so great value with us, as that of God and religion?

Though, if one would take that invidious course, it were easy to evince that such a predeterminative influx to the production of all whatsoever actions is the dearly espoused notion of one, of as deservedly an ill character as ever had the name of a Christian writer. And whether he would not take that name for a dishonour to him, I pretend not to know.

But let us take this sober account of the present case:—That in this temporary state of trial, the efficacious grace of God is necessary to actions sincerely good and holy; which therefore all ought undespairingly to seek and pray for: but that in reference to other actions, he doth only supply men with such a power as whereby they are enabled, either to act, or, in many instances—and especially when they attempt anything that is evil—to suspend their own action.

And surely it carries so unexceptionable a face and aspect with it, that no man that is himself sober will think the worst name of whosoever shall have said the same thing, were a prejudice to it; or should more oblige him to reject it, than we would think ourselves obliged to throw away gold or diamonds, because an impure hand hath touched them; or to deny Christ, because the devils confessed him.

Though also, if any should impute the so stating of this matter to any author that hath been wont to go under an ill name and character in the Christian church, there were a great oversight committed; to say no harder thing of it.

For the writers whose names would be supposed a prejudice, have neither said the same thing nor with the same design.

They would have this *indetermination* of the power afforded to the creature, to be so universal as to extend equally to evil

actions and to good; and have asserted it with a manifest design to exclude efficacious grace in reference to the best actions.

Whereas this account would make it not of so large extent; as it were very unreasonable any should. For though it may well be supposed extendible to many actions besides those that are intrinsically evil, or to any that are not spiritually good, yet nothing enforces, nor can it be admitted, that it should actually and always extend so far. For who can doubt but God can overrule the inclinations and actions of his creature when he pleases; and, as shall best consist with his wisdom and the purity of his nature, either lay on or take off his determining hand?

Nor is it here asserted with any other design than to exempt the blessed God, as far as is possible, from a participation in the evil actions of his creatures; in the meantime entitling him most entirely to those that are sincerely good: though it must be left imputable to men themselves (it being through their own great default) if they have not the grace which might effectually enable them to do such also.

And as for the *latter:* this supposed *indetermination* of the human will, in reference especially to wicked actions, is far from being capable of inferring that God cannot therefore foreknow them; or anything more than that we are left ignorant of the way how he foreknows them. And how small is the inconvenience of acknowledging that! Yea, and how manifest the absurdity of not acknowledging the like in many cases; since nothing is more certain than that God doth many things besides, whereof the manner how he does them, we can neither explicate nor understand! For neither is it difficult to assign instances, more than enough, of actions done by ourselves, of the manner whereof we can give no distinct account; as those of vision, intellection, with sundry others.

Some have been at great pains, we well know, to explain the manner of God's foreknowledge of these futurities otherwise than by laying the foundation thereof in his supposed effica-

cious will or decree of them. They that can satisfy themselves with what Thomas and Scotus have attempted, and the followers of them both; that can understand what it is, with the one, for all things to be eternally present to the Divine intellect *in esse reali*, and not understand by it the world to have been eternal: or what, with the other, that they be all present only *in esse representativo*, and not understand by it barely *that they are all known*, and no more—which seems like the explication of the word 'invasion' by 'invasion'—let them enjoy their own satisfaction.

For my own part, I can more easily be satisfied to be ignorant of the *modus* or *medium* of his knowledge, while I am sure of the thing; and I know not why any sober-minded man might not be so too, while we must all be content to be ignorant of the manner, yea, and nature too, of a thousand things besides, when that such things there are, we have no doubt; and when there are few things about which we can, with less disadvantage, suffer our being ignorant; or, with less disreputation, profess to be so.

It cannot therefore be so affrightful a thing, to suppose God's foreknowledge of the most contingent future actions well to consist with our ignorance how he foreknows them, as that we should think it necessary to overturn and mingle heaven and earth rather than admit it.

Section VIII.

Wherefore waiving that unfeasible, unnecessary, and unenjoined task, of defending God's *predeterminative* concourse unto sinful actions: our encounter must only be of the more superable difficulty, to reconcile his prescience of them with his provisions against them; that is, how fitly the wise and holy God can have interposed his precautions and dissuasions, in their own nature aptly tending to withhold and divert men from those evil actions which he yet foresees they will do.

And it is in the first place evident there can be no pretence to allege that there is any such repugnancy in the matter as shall amount to a contradiction so much as virtual; or

which the things signified, on the one part and the other, can be understood any way to import. That indeed there should be a direct and explicit contradiction between foreknowing and dehorting, we may, at first sight, perceive the terms cannot admit; for there is nothing enunciated (affirmed or denied) in either. But let the sense of both be resolved into propositions, capable of being confronted to one another; and all that can be made of the former will only come to this, 'You will do such a thing,' and of the latter no more but this, 'You ought not to do it.' These are at as great distance as can be imagined from grating upon or jarring with one another.

And wherein is the indecorum of it, that both these *effata* should proceed from the same mouth; namely, of a governor, or one that hath authority over others?

We will, for discourse sake, suppose a prince endowed with the gift or spirit of prophecy. This most will acknowledge a great perfection, added to whatsoever other his accomplishments. And suppose we this his prophetic ability so large as to extend to most events that shall fall out within his dominions: is it hereby become unfit for him to govern his subjects by laws, or any way admonish them of their duty? Hath this perfection so much diminished him as to depose him from his government?

It is not indeed to be dissembled, that it were a difficulty to determine whether such foresight were, for *himself*, better or worse: boundless knowledge seems only in a fit conjunction with as unbounded power. But it is altogether unimaginable that it should destroy his relation to his subjects; as what of it were left, if it should despoil him of his legislative power, and capacity of governing according to laws made by it?

And to bring back the matter to the *supreme* Ruler. Let it for the present be supposed only, that the blessed God hath belonging to his nature the universal prescience whereof we are discoursing; we will surely upon that supposition acknowledge it to belong to him as a perfection.

And were it reasonable to affirm that by a perfection he is disabled for government? Or were it a good consequence,—'He foreknows all things, he is therefore unfit to govern the world?'

Section IX.

And, that we may consider the matter more narrowly, would the supposition of such foreknowledge in God make that cease to be man's duty which had otherwise been so, and take away the differences of good and evil? Would it nullify the obligation of God's law, and make man's own inclination his only rule? Or if it be said,—because it is foreknown man *will* do such a thing, therefore he *may*, where is the connexion? For what influence can foreknowledge have, to alter, or affect any way, either the nature of the thing foreknown or the temper of the person that shall do it; any more than the present knowledge of the same thing, now in doing? which knowledge none would deny to God: and which, when it occurs to a man, is no more understood to make an evil action innocent, than the action makes the eye guilty, of him that beholds it only and detests it at once. Surely what is in its own nature, whether good or evil, can never not be so, be it foreknown or not foreknown.

But if what was otherwise man's duty, be still his duty, what can make it unfit that it be declared and made known to him to be so? And how is that otherwise to be done than by these disputed means? Yea—for this is the case—what can make it less fit, than it would be that God should cease to rule over the world; and quit the right of his government to his revolted creatures, upon no other reason than only that he foresees they have a mind to invade it?

It may now, perhaps, be said, All this reasoning tends indeed to establish the contrary assertion,—that notwithstanding God do foreknow man's sin, it is however necessary he forewarn him of it,—but it answers not the objected difficulty; namely, how reasonably any such means are used for an unattainable end; as it is manifest, the end, man's

obedience, cannot be attained when it is foreknown he will *not* obey.

Section X.

It may here, before we proceed further, not be unseasonable to consider a matter, as is known, wont to be much vexed in the schools,—how God may be said to act for any end at all. And it appears very certain that he, who is so every way absolutely perfect and happy, cannot be thought to intend and pursue an end after the same manner as *we* are wont to do.

We being conscious to ourselves of indigency, or, at the best, of obligation to the Author of our beings, are wont to design this or that end for the relieving of ourselves, or the approving ourselves to him: and, our satisfaction depending upon the attainment of it, we solicitously deliberate about the fittest means to attain it; and are tossed with various passions of desire, and hope, and fear, and joy, and grief, according as the end is apprehended more or less excellent, or likely to be attained; varying often our course upon new emergencies, as this or that may probably promote or hinder the success of our pursuit. In short, we pursue ends, as being both impatient of disappointment and uncertain of their attainment.

The blessed God, being indigent of nothing, nor under obligation to any one, cannot be supposed to propound an end to himself, as that whereupon his satisfaction depends; which were inconsistent with his already complete felicity, and would argue him but potentially happy: but acting always from an immense self-sufficient fulness of life and of all perfections, doth ever satisfy himself in himself, and take highest complacency in the perfect goodness, congruity, and rectitude of his own most holy will and way.

And again; as he doth not seek a yet unattained satisfaction in any end he can be supposed to propound to himself; so nor can he be thought to deliberate, as we are wont to do, concerning the means of effecting any. For delibera-

tion would imply doubtfulness and uncertainty, which his absolute perfection cannot admit, nor doth need; the whole frame and compass of things intended by him, in their distinct references and tendencies, being at once present to his all-comprehending view; so that there can be no place for any intermediate knowledge with him, or for any new resolves thereupon. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."[1]

Section XI.

This being premised, it is now further to be considered, that howsoever *one* end oftentimes is not attained, unto which the publicly extant declarations of the Divine Will have a visible aptitude, namely, the obedient compliance of men with them; another more noble end was however attainable, not unbecoming the designment of the Divine wisdom, and which it was every way most worthy of God to be more principally intent upon.

It is fit the mention of this be prefaced with an obvious remark;—that the misapprehension of the state of things between God and man doth, in great part, owe itself to our aptness to compare unduly the Divine government with that of secular rulers; and our expectation to find them in all things agreeing with each other: whereas there cannot but be a vast difference between the constitution and end of God's government over his creatures, and more especially mankind, and that of man over his fellow-creatures of the same kind.

The government of secular, human rulers, can never be, in the constitution of it, altogether absolute; nor ought, in the design of it, primarily to intend the personal advantage of the ruler himself, who as much depends upon his subjects, and hath at least as great need of them, as they can be understood to have of him. But as to the blessed God, the matter is apparent, and hath its own triumphant evidence, that since he is the original and root of all being,—that all things are mere dependencies upon his absolute pleasure, and

[1] Acts xv. 18.

entirely of him and by him,—all ought to be to him, that he alone might have the glory.[1]

Wherefore, it must be asserted, and cannot fail of obtaining to be acknowledged by every impartial and sober considerer of things,—that there is a much more noble and important end that all God's public edicts and declarations to men—the instruments of his government over them—do more principally aim at, than their advantage; namely, the dignity and decorum of his government itself; and that he may be found in everything to have done as became him and was most worthy of himself. And what could be more so than that he should testify the aversion of his own pure and holy nature to whatsoever was unholy and impure; his love of righteousness, and complacency to be imitated herein, together with his steady, gracious propension to receive all them into the communion of his own felicity or blessedness, for the Redeemer's sake, who should herein comply with him?

Nor are we to understand that he herein so designs the reputation of his government, as men are often wont to do things out of design for their interest, *in that kind*, that are *otherwise* against their overruled inclination. But we are to account these his declarations, although they are acts of an intelligent agent and the products of wisdom and counsel, yet also the spontaneous emanations of his own holy and gracious nature, such as wherein he most fully agrees and consents with himself. And is it now to be expected, that, because he foresees men will be wicked and do what shall be unworthy of them, he must therefore lay aside his nature and omit to do what shall be worthy of himself?

Section XII.

And hereupon it may be expected, the more ingenuous and candid will allow themselves to think the matter tolerably clear in reference to the former part of the proposed difficulty; that is, will apprehend this way of dealing with men not imprudent, or inconsistent with the Divine wisdom, since,

[1] Rom. xi. 36.

though one end in a great part fail, yet another, more valuable, is attained.

But yet, as to the latter part, the difficulty may still urge; namely, how it can stand with sincerity,—whereas that end also which fails seems to have been most directly intended,—that the blessed God should seem so earnestly intent upon it: since it is hardly conceivable that the same thing should be at once seriously intended as an end, and yet at the same time give the eye, which seems to design it, no other prospect than of a thing never to be brought to pass.

Wherefore we are next to consider,—that we may proceed gradually, and not omit to say what is in itself considerable, though it is not all (which cannot be said at once) that is to be said,—that the public declarations of the Divine will, touching man's duty, do attain that very end, his obedient *compliance* therewith, in great part and as to many, although it be foreknown they will prove ineffectual with the most; and are the no less *successful*, than the *apt*, means of attaining it.

Nor, certainly, if it were foreknown the world would be so divided as that some would obey and others not obey, was it therefore the fittest course, that these two sorts should, by some extraordinary act of Providence, be carefully severed from each other; and those be dealt withal apart from the rest: but rather, that the Divine edicts should be of a universal tenour, and be directed to all as they are; the matter of them being of universal concernment and equally suitable to the common case of all men.

Section XIII.

Neither yet was it necessary that effectual care should be taken they should actually reach all, and be applied to every individual person; since it is apparently to be resolved into the wickedness of the world, that they do not so, and that there is not a universal diffusion of the gospel into every part.

For it being evident to any one's reflection that men are in

a state of apostasy and defection from their Maker and common Lord, and therefore subject to his displeasure;—whereas the merciful God hath done his own part and so much beyond what was to be expected from him; issued out his proclamations of peace and pardon, upon so easy and indulgent terms as are expressed in his gospel; if, hereupon, men also did their part, behaved themselves suitably to the exigency of their case, and as did become reasonable creatures fallen under the displeasure of their Maker (whereof their common condition affords so innumerable, so pregnant proofs), the gospel, wheresoever it should arrive, would have been entertained with so great a transport of joy and so ready and universal acceptance, as very soon to have made a great noise in the world: and being found to be of a universal tenour and concernment, and that what it says to one nation it equally says the same to every one; it could not but be that messengers would interchangeably have run from nation to nation; some to communicate, others to inquire after those strange tidings of great joy unto all people, lately sent from heaven; concerning the "Immanuel, God with us," God again upon his return to man, and now "in Christ reconciling the world to himself." And thus how easily, and even naturally, would the gospel soon have spread itself through the world; especially the merciful God having so provided that there should be an office constituted and set up, a sort of men whose whole business it should be to propagate and publish those happy tidings!

But that men should so indulge their sensual, terrene inclination, as not at all to use their understandings and considering power about other matters than only what are within the sight of their eye, when by so easy and quick a turn of thoughts they might feel and find out who made them, and was the Original of their life and being, and that things are not right and as they should be between him and them; and so by what is within the compass of natural revelation, be prepared for what is supernatural: and not that only; but to that stupidity by which they are unapt to

inquire after and receive, to add that obstinate malignity, by which they are apt to reject and oppose the merciful discoveries and overtures of their offended, reconcilable Creator and Lord: how manifestly doth this devolve the whole business of the little, slow progress of the gospel in the world, upon themselves only!

As suppose we a prince of the greatest clemency, benignity, and goodness, from whom a whole country of his subjects have made a most causeless defection, hereupon to send to the whole body of the rebels a gracious proclamation of free pardon, upon their return to their allegiance and duty; and it only from hence comes to pass, that every individual person of them distinctly understands not what the message from their prince did import, because they that heard it would not, many of them, allow themselves to consider and regard it; and others of them, with despiteful violence, fell upon the heralds, barbarously butchering some of them and ignominiously repulsing the rest: who would not say that prince had fully done his part, and acquitted himself answerably to the best character, though he should send to the rebels no further overtures? much more, if, through a long tract of time, he continue the same amicable endeavours for their reducement, notwithstanding the constant experience of the same ill success? Who would not cast the whole business of the continued ill understanding between him and the revolters upon themselves? and reckon it impossible any should be ignorant of his kind and benign inclinations and intentions, if an implacable enmity and disaffection to him and his government were not their common temper?

Though, so infinitely do the mercies of God exceed those of the most merciful prince on earth, as well as his knowledge and power, that wheresoever there are any exempt cases, we must conceive him equally able and inclined to consider them distinctly. And so vastly different, may we well suppose the degrees of happiness and misery to be in the other world, as that there may be latitude enough of punishing and rewarding men proportionably to the degrees of light they have

had, and the more or less malignity, or propension to reconciliation, was found with them thereupon.

Section XIV.

Nor again was it at all incongruous or unbecoming, that the blessed God,—this being the common temper and disposition of all men, to reject his gracious tenders,—should provide by some extraordinary means, that they might not be finally rejected by all. For what can be more appropriate to sovereignty, even where it is infinitely less absolute, than arbitrarily to design the objects of special favour? Who blames a prince for placing special marks of his royal bounty or clemency here and there, as he thinks fit? or that he hath some peculiar favourites with whom he familiarly converses, whom he hath won by some or other not common inducements, and assured their loyal affection, though there be thousands of persons in his dominions besides of as good parts, dispositions, and deserts as they? It belongs to sovereignty only, so to be favourable to some, as, in the mean time, to be just towards all.

Yea, and it must be acknowledged, such are the dispensations of the holy God towards the whole community of mankind, as import not only strict righteousness, but great clemency and mercy also.

Though they might easily understand themselves to be offenders and liable to the severities of his justice, they are spared by his patience, sustained by his bounty, protected by his power, their lives and properties are fenced by his own laws. And whereas they are become very dangerous enemies to one another, and each one his own greatest enemy; it is provided by those laws, even for the worst of men, that none shall injure them, that all love them and seek their good. He interposes his authority on their behalf; and if any wrong them, he takes it for an affront done to himself. By the same laws they are directed to industry, frugality, sobriety, temperance; to exercise a government over themselves, to bridle and subdue their own exorbitant lusts and

passions,—their more immediate tormentors, and the sources of all the calamities and miseries which befall them in this world: by all which evidences of his great care and concern for their welfare, they might understand him to have favourable propensions towards them, and that though they have offended him, he is not their implacable enemy; and might, by his goodness, be led to repentance.

Yea and moreover, he hath sent them a Redeemer, his own Son, an incarnate Deity, who came down into this world, "full of grace and truth," upon the most merciful errand: and they have some of them been in transports when they have but fancied such a descent, for the doing them only some lighter good turn; as upon the cure of the cripple: "The gods," say they, "are come down to us in the likeness of men."[1]

He being filled with the glorious "fulness of the Godhead," hath been a voluntary sacrifice for the sins of men; and if they would believe and obey him, they would find that sacrifice is accepted and available for them.

And though they are disabled to do so only by their own wicked inclination, even against *that* also they have no cause to despair of being relieved, if they would,—which they might,—admit the thoughts of their impotency and the exigency of their case, and did seriously implore Divine help.

Section XV.

Now with whom these methods succeed well, there is no suspicion of insincerity; let us see what pretence there can be for it with the rest.

It is to be considered, that, as to them, he doth not apply himself to every, or to any, person immediately and severally, after some such tenour of speech as this: 'I know thee to be a profligate, hopeless wretch, and that thou wilt finally disregard whatsoever I say to thee, and consequently perish and become miserable. But, however, though I foresee most certainly thou wilt not, yet, I entreat thee to hear, and obey,

[1] Acts xiv. 11.

and live.' Indeed sending a prophet to a promiscuous people, he foretells him of such ill success;[1] but it is not told him he should succeed so ill universally, and it is implied he should not.[2]

But the course the great God takes is only to apply himself to these, as hath been said, in common with the rest. For if it be said he also applies himself to them by the private dictates of his Spirit, he doth not, by it, make formed speeches to men; but, as to those its common motions whereby it applies itself unto them, doth only solicit, in a stated manner of operation in and by their own reason and consciences,—as he concurs with our inferior faculties, and with the inferior creatures suitably to their natures and capacities,—speaking no other than their own language, as they are instructed out of his word or by other means: which he usually continues to do till by their resistencies they have sealed up their own consciences, and consequently—according to its more ordinary fixed course, and laws of access and recess—shut out the Holy Spirit, both at once. Nor is it more to be expected, he should universally alter that course, than that he should alter the courses of the sun, moon, and stars, and innovate upon universal nature.

So that what is endeavoured for the reducement of such as finally refuse to return, by particular applications to this or that person and beyond what is contained in the public declarations of his written word, is by substituted ministers and inferior agents, that know no more of the event than they do themselves.

And that this was the fittest way of dealing with reasonable creatures, who, that will use his own reason, sees not?

Section XVI.

That our disquisition may be here a little more strict, we shall inquire both,—

What may be supposed possible to be alleged out of God's word in reference to them that persist in wickedness till they

[1] Ezek. iii. 7. [2] Ver. 21.

finally perish, which it can be thought not consistent with sincerity to have inserted upon the supposed foresight of so dismal an issue:

And what more convenient course we can think of, which sincerity, as we apprehend, would have required.

As to the *former*. It may perhaps be alleged, that he professes "to will the salvation of all men;"[1] not to "desire the death of him that dieth;"[2] yea, and professes himself grieved that any perish.[3] Now these things, compared with his public declarations and tenders, directed in a universal tenour to all men, carry that appearance and show with them, as if he would have it believed his end were to save all: wherewith his foresight of the perdition of so many seems ill to agree. For how can that end be seriously intended, which it is foreseen will not be brought about? And how can it be thought to consist with sincerity, that there should be an appearance of his having such an end, unto which a serious real intention of it doth not correspond?

Wherefore we shall here examine what appearance such expressions as those above recited, can, by just interpretation, be understood to amount unto: and then show, that there is *really* with the blessed God, what doth truly and fully correspond to that appearance; and very agreeably too with the hypothesis of his foreseeing how things will finally issue with very many.

And first, that we may understand the true import of the expressions which we have mentioned and others of like sound and meaning, we are to consider that,—though being taken severally and apart, they are not capable of a sense prejudicial to the cause the defence whereof we have undertaken, which we shall afterwards more distinctly evince,—yet it were very injurious to go about to affix a sense unto a single expression, without weighing the general design of the writings whereof it is a part.

It were quite to frustrate the use of words, when a matter is to be represented that is copious and consists of many parts

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 4. [2] Ezek. xviii. 32. [3] Ps. lxxxi. 12, 13.

and branches, which cannot be comprehended in one or a few sentences, if we will pretend to estimate and make a judgment of the speaker's full meaning by this or that single passage only, because we have not patience or leisure to hear the rest; or perhaps have a greater disposition to cavil at his words than understand his meaning.

If a course resembling this should be taken in interpreting the edicts or laws of princes and states (suppose it were a proclamation of pardon to delinquent subjects) and only this or that favourable clause be fastened upon, without regard to the inserted provisos and conditions; the concerned interpreters might do a slight, temporary, and easily remediable wrong to the prince; but are in danger, more fatally, to wrong themselves.

The edicts of the great God, that are publicly extant to mankind, (the universal publication whereof they partly withstand, and which they too commonly deprave and perversely misinterpret where they do obtain,) carry no such appearance with them as if he had ever proposed it to himself, for his end, to save all men, or any man, let them do what they please, or how destructive a course soever they take and shall finally persist in.

If that were supposed his design, his so seemingly serious counsels and exhortations were as ludicrous, as they could be thought if it were as peremptorily determined all should perish. For what God will, by almighty power, immediately work, without the subordinate concurrence of any second cause, must be *necessarily*. And it is equally vain, solicitously to endeavour the engaging of subordinate agents to do that, which, *without* them, is *absolutely necessary*, as it were to endeavour that, *by* them, which is *absolutely impossible*.

Section XVII.

That which his declarations to men do amount unto is in sum thus much: That whereas they have by their defection and revolt from him made themselves liable to his justice, and very great consequent miseries; he is willing to pardon,

save, and restore them to a blessed state, upon such terms as shall be agreeable,—the recompense due to his injured law being otherwise provided for at no expense of theirs,—to the nature of that blessedness they are to enjoy, the purity of his own nature, and the order and dignity of his government: that is, that they seriously repent and turn to him, love him as the Lord their God with all their heart, and soul, and might, and mind, and one another as themselves, being to make together one happy community in the participation of the same blessedness; commit themselves by entire trust, subjection, and devotedness to their great and merciful Redeemer, according to the measure of light wherewith he shall have been revealed and made known to them; submit to the motions and dictates of his blessed Spirit, whereby the impression of his own holy image is to be renewed in them and a divine nature imparted to them; and carefully attend to his word as the means, the impressive instrument or seal, by which,—understood and considered,—that impression shall be made, and the very seed out of which that holy nature, and the entire frame of the new creature, shall result and spring up in them; so as to make them apt unto the obedience that is expected from them, and capable of the blessedness they are to expect; that if they neglect to attend to these external discoveries, and refuse the ordinary aids and assistances of his good Spirit, and offer violence to their own consciences, they are not to expect he should overpower them by a strong hand, and save them against the continuing disinclination of their own wills.

Nor, whatsoever extraordinary acts he may do upon some to make them willing, is there any universal promise in his word, or other encouragement, upon which any may reasonably promise themselves, that in the neglect and disuse of all ordinary means, such power shall be used with them as shall finally overcome their averse disaffected hearts?

Section XVIII.

It is true that he frequently uses much importunity with

men, and enforces his laws with that earnestness as if it were his own great interest to have them obeyed; wherein, having to do with men, he doth like a man solicitously intent upon an end, which he cannot be satisfied till he attain: yet withal he hath interspersed, everywhere in his word, so frequent Godlike expressions of his own greatness, all-sufficiency, and independency upon his creatures, as that if we attend to these his public declarations and manifests of himself *entirely*, so as to compare one thing with another, we shall find the matter not at all dissembled; but might collect *this* to be the state of things between him and us:—that he makes no overtures to us, as thinking us considerable, or as if anything were to accrue to him from us: but that as he takes pleasure in the diffusion of his own goodness, so it is our interest to behave ourselves suitably thereunto; and according as we comply with it and continue in it, or do not, so we may expect the delectable communications of it, or taste, otherwise, his just severity: that therefore when he exhorts, obtests, entreats, beseeches, that we would obey and live; speaks as if he were grieved at our disobedience, and what is like to ensue to us therefrom; these are merciful condescensions, and the efforts of that goodness which chooseth the fittest ways of *moving us*, rather than that he is *moved himself* by any such passions as we are wont to feel in ourselves, when we are pursuing our own designs; and that he vouchsafeth to speak in such a way as is less suitable to *himself*, that it may be more suitable to *us*, and might teach us, while he so far complies with us, how becoming it is that we answerably bend ourselves to a compliance with him. He speaks sometimes as if he did suffer somewhat *human*, as an apt means (and which to many proves effectual) to bring us to enjoy, at length, what is truly *divine*. We may, if we consider and lay things together, understand these to be gracious insinuations; whereby, as he hath not left the matter liable to be so misunderstood as if he were really affected with solicitude or any perturbation concerning us (which he hath sufficiently given us to understand his blessed nature cannot admit of) so nor can they be

thought to be disguises of himself, or misrepresentations that have nothing in him corresponding to them. For they really signify the obedience and blessedness of those his creatures that are capable thereof, to be more pleasing and agreeable to his nature and will than that they should disobey and perish; which is the utmost that can be understood * to be * meant by those words, "God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth;" but withal that he so apprehends the indignity done to his government by their disobedience, that if they obey not,—as the indulgent constitution and temper of his law, and government now are, in and by the Redeemer,—they must perish; and that he hath also such respect to the congruity and order of things, as that it shall not be the ordinary method of his government over reasonable creatures to overpower them into that obedience, by which it may come to pass that they perish not. All which may be collected from those his own plain words in that other recited text, and many besides of like import; when, with so awful solemnity, he professes that "as he lives he takes no pleasure in the death of sinners, but that they may turn and live;" and adds, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"[1] That is, that their repentance and consequent welfare would be more *grateful* to him, than their perdition, upon their persevering in destructive ways: but yet, that if they were not moved to repent by these his pleadings and expostulations used with them, they should die, and were therefore concerned to attend and hearken to such his reasonings and warnings, as the apt means to work their good; not expecting he should take extraordinary courses with them in order to it: and that the *real* respect he had thereunto should never induce him to use any indecorous course, to bring it about; but that he had a more principal respect to the rules of justice and the order of his government than to their concernments. And that he, notwithstanding, expresses himself aggrieved that any finally perish,—if we consider and recollect what notices he hath furnished our minds with, of the perfections of a Deity, and

[1] Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

what he hath remonstrated to us of his own nature so plainly in his word,—we cannot understand more by it than the calm dispassionate resentment and dislike which most perfect purity and goodness have of the sinfulness and miserable ruin of his own creatures.

In all which we have a most unexceptionable idea of God, and may behold the comely conjuncture of his large goodness, strict righteousness, and most accurate wisdom all together; as we are also concerned, in making our estimate of his ways, to consider them, and not to take our measure of what is suitable to God by considering him according to one single attribute only; but as they all are united in his most perfect Being, and in that blessed harmony as not to infer with him a difficulty what to do or what not: which sometimes falls out with men, where there is an imperfect resemblance of those Divine excellencies, not so exactly contempered together: as it was with that Spartan prince and general in Plutarch, when finding a necessity to march his army, and taking notice of one for whom he had a peculiar kindness, that, through extreme weakness, was not possibly to be removed, he looked back upon him, expressing his sense of that exigency in those emphatical words, 'How hard a matter is it at once, ἐλεεῖν καὶ φρονεῖν, to exercise pity and be wise!'

God's own word misrepresents him not, but gives a true account of him, if we allow ourselves to confer it with itself, one part of it with another. Nor doth any part of it, taken alone, import him so to have willed the happiness of men for any end of his, that he resolved he would by *whatsoever means* certainly effect it: as *we* are wont, many times, with such eagerness to pursue ends upon which we are intent, as not to consider of right or wrong, fit or unfit in our pursuit of them, and so let the cost of our means not seldom eat up our end. Nor did that belong to him, or was his part as our most benign, wise, and righteous governor, to provide that we should certainly not transgress, or not suffer prejudice thereby; but that we should not do so through his omission of anything, which it became him to do to prevent it.

Section XIX.

It may therefore be of some use further to take notice that a very diverse consideration must be had of the ends which shall be effected by God's *own action* only, and of those which are to be brought about, in concurrence and subordination to his own, by the *intervenient action of his creatures;* especially, which is more to our purpose, such of them as are intelligent, and capable of being governed by laws.

As to the former sort of these ends, we may be confident they were all most absolutely intended and can never fail of being accomplished.

For the latter, it cannot be universally said so. For these being not entirely his ends, but partly his, and partly prescribed by him to his reasonable creatures to be theirs; we are to conceive he always most absolutely intends to do what he righteously esteems congruous should be his own part; which he extends and limits as seems good unto him: and sometimes, of his own good pleasure, assumes to himself the doing of so much as shall ascertain the end; effectually procuring that his creature shall do his part also: that is, not only enacts his law, and adds exhortations, warnings, promises, to enforce it; but also emits that effectual influence whereby the inferior wheels shall be put into motion, the powers and faculties of his governed creature excited and assisted, and (by a "Spirit in the wheels") made as the chariots of a willing people. At other times and in other instances he doth less, and meeting with resistance sooner retires; follows not his external edicts and declarations with so potent and determinative an influence, but that the creature, through his own great default, may omit to do his part, and so *that end* be not effected.

That the course of his economy towards men on earth is, *de facto*, ordered with this diversity, seems out of question: manifest experience shows it. Some do sensibly perceive that motive influence which others do not. The same persons, at some times, find not that which at other times

they do. His own word plainly asserts it. "He works in us to will and to do, of his own good pleasure." "Where he will, he," in this respect, "shows mercy; where he will, he hardeneth," or doth not prevent but that men be hardened. And indeed, we should be constrained to raze out a great part of the sacred volume, if we should not admit it to be so.

And as the equity and fitness of his making such difference, when it appears he doth make it, cannot without profaneness be doubted, so it is evident, from what was before said, they are far removed from the reach and confines of any *reasonable* doubt; since he forsakes none, but being first forsaken.

Nor have men any pretence to complain of subdolous dealing, or that they are surprisingly disappointed and lurched of such help as they might have expected; inasmuch as this is so plainly extant in God's open manifests to the world, that he uses a certain arbitrariness, especially in the more exuberant dispensation of his grace; and is inserted to that purpose, that they may be cautioned not to neglect lower assistances; and warned, because he "works to will and to do of his own pleasure," therefore "to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling:"[1] whereupon, elsewhere after the most persuasive, alluring invitations,—"Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you,"—it is presently subjoined, "Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh."[2]

From all which it is plainly to be understood that the general strain and drift of God's external revelation of his mind to man in his word, and the aspect of even those passages that can with most colour be thought to signify anything further, do amount to nothing more than this; that he doth so far *really will* the salvation of all, as not to omit the doing that which may effect it, if they be not neglectful of themselves; but not so as to effect it by that extraordinary

[1] Phil. ii. 12, 13. [2] Prov. i. 23—26.

exertion of power, which he thinks fit to employ upon some others.

Section XX.

Nor is it reasonably to be doubted (*such* a will being all that can be pretended to be the visible meaning of the passages before noted) whether there be such a will in God or no: and so somewhat really corresponding,—the next thing promised to be discoursed,—to the aspect and appearance hereof which is offered to our view. For what should be the reason of the doubt? He who best understands his own nature, having said of himself what imports no less, why should we make a difficulty to believe him? Nor indeed can any notices we have of the perfections of the Divine nature be less liable to doubt, than what we have of his unchangeable *veracity;* whence as it is *impossible* to him to lie, it must be *necessary* that he be *really willing* of what he hath represented himself so to be.

I must here profess my dislike of the terms of that common distinction, the *voluntas beneplaciti et signi*, in this present case: under which, such as coined and those that have much used it, have only rather, I doubt not, concealed a *good* meaning, than expressed by it an *ill* one. It seems, I confess, by its more obvious aspect, too much to countenance the ignominious slander which profane and atheistical dispositions would fasten upon God and the course of his procedure towards men; and which it is the design of these papers to evince of as much absurdity and folly, as it is guilty of impiety and wickedness: as though he only intended to *seem* willing of what he really was not; that there was an appearance to which nothing did *subesse*. And then why is the latter called *voluntas?* unless the meaning be, he did only will the *sign*, which is false and impious; and if it were true, did he not will it with the will of *good pleasure?* And then the members of the distinction are confounded. Or, as if the evil actions of men were more truly the objects of his good pleasure, than their forbearance of them!

And of these faults the application of the distinction of God's *secret will* and *revealed*, unto *this* case, though it be useful in many, is as guilty.

Section XXI.

The truth is (unto which we must esteem ourselves obliged to adhere, both by our assent and defence) that God doth really and complacentially will, and therefore doth with most unexceptionable sincerity declare himself to will, that to be done and enjoyed by many men, which he doth not universally will to *make* them do, or *irresistibly procure* that they shall enjoy: which is no harder assertion than that the impure will of degenerate sinful man is opposite to the holy will of God; and the malignity of man's will to the benignity of his: no harder than that there is sin and misery in the world, which how can we conceive otherwise than as a repugnancy to the "good and acceptable will of God?"

Methinks it should not be difficult to us to acknowledge, that God doth truly and with complacency *will* whatsoever is the holy righteous matter of his own laws. And if it should be with any a difficulty, I would only make this supposition: what if all the world were yet in innocency, yielding entire, universal obedience to all the now extant laws of God which have not reference to man as now fallen,—as those of repentance, faith in a Mediator, etc.,—would it now be a doubt with any, whether God did truly and really will, and were pleased with, the holiness and righteousness which were everywhere to be found in the world? Surely we would not in this case imagine the creature's will more pure and holy than the Divine; or that he were displeased with men for their being righteous and holy. Now again, suppose the world revolted, what then? Is that holy will of God changed? Will we not say it remains the same holy will still, and stands the same rule of righteousness and duty that it was? Doth the change of his rebel creatures infer any with him? Or do only the declarations of his former will remain to be their rule and keep them still obliged, his will itself being become

another from what it was? Surely he might as easily have changed his laws.

And if we say his will is changed, how should we know it to be so? If we know it not, surely such a thing should not be said or thought. If we knew it, how should those yet extant laws and declarations continue to oblige against the Lawgiver's known will? And then the easy expedient to nullify the obligation of a law that were thought too restrictive, were to disobey it; and men might by sinning once, license themselves to do the same thing (though then we could not call it sinning) always: and so the creature's should be the supreme and ruling will. Nor had it been a false suggestion, but a real truth, that man, by becoming a sinner, might make himself a God!

Or, if it shall be thought fit to say, that the Divine will would not in that supposed case be said to be changed; but only that now the event makes it appear not to have been what we thought it was; that were to impute both impurity and dissimulation to the holy blessed God, as his fixed attributes: and what we thought unfit, and should abhor to imagine might have place with him one moment, to affix to him for perpetuity.

Section XXII.

And whereas it may be thought to follow hence, that hereby we ascribe to God a liableness to frustration and disappointment, *that* is without pretence; the resolve of the Divine will, in this matter, being not concerning the event what man *shall* do, but concerning his duty what he *should*, and concerning the connexion between his duty and his happiness: which we say he doth not only *seem* to will, but wills it really and truly. Nor would his prescience of the event, which we all this while assert, let frustration be so much as possible to him; especially, it being at once foreseen, that his will being crossed in this, would be fulfilled in so important a thing as the preserving the decorum of his own government; which had been most apparently blemished

beyond what could consist with the perfections of the Deity, if either his will concerning man's duty, or the declarations of that will, had not been substantially the same that they are.

We are therefore in assigning the object of this or that act of the Divine will, to do it *entirely*, and to take the whole object together, without dividing it as if the will of God did wholly terminate upon what indeed is but a part—and especially if that be but a less considerable part—of the thing willed. In the present case, we are not to conceive that God only wills either man's duty or felicity, or that herein his will doth solely and ultimately terminate: but in the whole, the determination of God's will is, that man shall be duly governed, that is, congruously both to Himself, and him: that such and such things, most congruous to both, shall be man's duty; by his doing whereof, the dignity and honour of God's own government might be preserved, which was the thing principally to be designed, and in the first place; and, as what was secondary thereto, that hereby man's felicity should be provided for. Therefore, it being foreseen a violation would be done to the sacred rights of the Divine government by man's disobedience, it is resolved they shall be repaired and maintained by other means: so that the Divine will hath its effect as to what was its more noble and principal design; the other part failing only by *his* default, whose is the loss.

And if yet it should be insisted, that in asserting God to will what by his laws he hath made become man's duty, even where it is not done, we shall herein ascribe to him at least an *ineffectual* and an *imperfect* will, as which doth not bring to pass the thing willed; it is answered, that imperfection were with no pretence imputable to the Divine will, merely for its not effecting everything whereto it may have a real propension. But it would be more liable to that imputation, if it should effect anything, which it were less fit for him to effect than not to effect it. The absolute perfection of his will stands in the proportion which every act of it bears to

the importance of the things about which it is conversant: even as with men, the perfection of any act of will is to be estimated, not by the mere peremptory sturdiness of it, but by its proportion to the goodness of the thing willed: upon which account, a mere *velleity*, (as many love to speak,) when the degree of goodness in the object claims no more, hath inconceivably greater perfection in it than the most obstinate volition.

And since the event forbids us to admit, that God did ever will the obedience and felicity of all, with such a will as should be effective thereof; if yet his plain word shall be acknowledged the measure of our belief in this matter, which so plainly asserts him some way to will the salvation of all men, it is strange if hereupon we shall not admit rather of a will not effective of the thing willed, than none at all.

The will of God is sufficiently to be vindicated from all imperfection, if he have sufficient reason for all the propensions and determinations of it; whether from the value of the things willed or from his own sovereignty who wills them.

In the present case, we need not doubt to affirm that the obedience and felicity of all men is of that value, as whereunto a propension of will, by only simple complacency, is proportionable: yet, that his not procuring as to all, by such courses as he more extraordinarily takes with some, that they shall in event obey and be happy, is upon so much more valuable reasons (as there will be further occasion to show ere long) as that *not* to do it was more eligible, with the higher complacency of a determinative will.

And since the public declarations of his good will towards all men import no more than the former and do plainly import so much, their correspondency to the matter declared is sufficiently apparent. And so is the congruity of both with his prescience of the event.

For though when God urges and incites men, by exhortations, promises, and threats, to the doing of their own part,—which it is most agreeable to his holy gracious nature to do,—

he foresees many will not be moved thereby, but persist in wilful neglect and rebellions till they perish; he at the same time sees, that they might do otherwise, and that if they would comply with his methods, things would otherwise issue with them: his prescience no way imposing upon them a necessity to transgress. For they do it, not because he foreknew it, but he only foreknew it because they would do so. And hence he had, as it was necessary he should have, not only *this* for the object of his foreknowledge, that they *would do amiss and perish;* but the whole case in its circumstances, that they *would do so, not through his omission, but their own.* And there had been no place left for this state of the case, if his public edicts and manifests had not gone forth in this tenour as they have.

So that the consideration of his prescience being taken in, gives us only, in the whole, this state of the case: that he foresaw men would not take that course, which he truly declared himself willing they should—and was graciously ready to assist them in it—in order to their own well-being: whence all complaint of insincere dealing is left without pretence.

Section XXIII.

Nor, as we also undertook to show, could any course within our prospect have been taken, that was fit in itself and more agreeable to sincerity.

There are only these two ways to be thought on besides: either that God should wholly have forborne to make overtures to men in common; or, that he should efficaciously have overpowered all into a compliance with them: and there is little doubt but, upon sober consideration, both of these will be judged altogether unfit:—

The *former*, inasmuch as it had been most disagreeable to the exact measures of his *government*, to let a race of sinful creatures persist through many successive ages in apostasy and rebellion, when the characters of that law, first written in man's heart, were in so great a measure outworn and

become illegible, without renewing the impression in another way and reasserting his right and authority as their Ruler and Lord;—to the *holiness of his nature,* not to send into the world such a declaration of his will, as might be a standing testimony against the impurity whereinto it was lapsed;—to the *goodness of it,* not to make known upon what terms, and for whose sake, he was reconcilable;—*and to the truth of the thing,* since he really had such kind propensions towards men in common, not to make them known: that it had itself been more liable to the charge of insincerity, to have concealed from men what was real truth, and of so much concernment to them. And he did, in revealing them, but act his own nature; the goodness whereof is no more lessened by men's refusal of its offers, than his truth can be made of none effect by their disbelief of its assertions: besides the great use such an extant revelation of the way of recovery was to be of, to those that should obediently comply with it, even after they should be won so to do.

Section XXIV.

And the *latter* we may also apprehend very unfit too; though, because that is less obvious, it requires to be more largely insisted on.

For it would seem, that if *we* do not effect anything which we have a real will unto, it must proceed from impotency, and that we cannot do it; which who would say of the great God? Herein therefore we shall proceed by steps; and gradually offer the things that follow to consideration:—as that it were indeed most repugnant to the notion of a Deity, to suppose anything, which includes in it no contradiction, *impossible* to God, considered according to that single attribute of power only.

But yet we must add, that this were a very unequal way of estimating what God can do; that is, to consider him as a *mere* Being of power. For the notion of God so conceived were very inadequate to him, which, taken entirely, imports the comprehension of all perfections. So that they are two

very distant questions, 'What the power of God alone could do;' and, 'What God can do.' And whereas to the former, the answer would be, 'Whatsoever is not in itself repugnant to be done:' to the latter, it must only be, 'Whatsoever it becomes, or is agreeable to a Being everyway perfect to do:' and so it is to be attributed to the excellency of his nature, if amongst all things not simply impossible, there be any, which it may be truly said he *cannot* do; or, it proceeds not from the imperfection of his power, but from the concurrence of all other perfections in him. Hence his own word plainly affirms of him, "that he cannot lie." And by common consent it will be acknowledged, that he cannot do any unjust act whatsoever.

To this I doubt not we may with as common suffrage, when the matter is considered, subjoin,—that his *wisdom* doth as much limit the exercise of his power, as his *righteousness* or his truth doth: and that it may with as much confidence and clearness be said and understood, that he cannot do an unwise or imprudent act, as an unjust.

Further; that as his righteousness corresponds to the justice of things to be done or not done, so doth his wisdom to the congruity or fitness. So that he cannot do what it is *unfit* for him to do, because he is wise; and because he is most perfectly and infinitely wise, therefore nothing that is *less fit*. But whatsoever is fittest, when a comparison is made between doing this or that, or between doing and not doing, *that* the perfection of his nature renders necessary to him, and the opposite part impossible.

Again; that this measure must be understood to have a very large and most general extent unto all the affairs of his government,—the object it concerns being so very large. We in our observation may take notice, that fewer questions can occur concerning what is *right* or *wrong* than what is *fit* or *unfit:* and whereas any man may in a moment be honest, if he have a mind to it, very few, and that by long experience, can ever attain to be wise: the things about which justice is conversant being reducible to certain rules, but wisdom

supposes very general knowledge of things scarce capable of such reduction; and is besides the primary requisite in any one that bears rule over others, and must therefore most eminently influence all the managements of the Supreme Ruler.

Section XXV.

It is moreover to be considered, that innumerable congruities lie open to the Infinite Wisdom, which are never obvious to our view or thought; as to a well-studied scholar, thousands of coherent notions, which an illiterate person never thought of; to a practised courtier or well-educated gentleman, many decencies and indecencies in the matter of civil behaviour and conversation, which an unbred rustic knows nothing of; and to an experienced statesman, those importancies, which never occur to the thoughts of him who daily follows the plough. What government is there that hath not its *arcana*, profound mysteries and reasons of state, that a vulgar wit cannot dive into? and from whence, the account to be given why this or that is done or not done, is not always that it would have been unjust it should be otherwise, but it had been imprudent. And many things are hereupon judged necessary, not from the exigency of justice, but reason of state. Whereupon men of modest and sober minds, that have had experience of the wisdom of their governors, and their happy conduct through a considerable tract of time,—when they see things done by them, the leading reasons whereof they do not understand, and the effect and success comes not yet in view,—suspend their censure, while as yet all seems to them obscure, and wrapt up in clouds and darkness: yea though the course that is taken have, to their apprehension, an ill aspect: accounting it becomes them not to make a judgment of things so far above their reach, and confiding in the tried wisdom of their rulers, who, they believe, see reasons for what they do, into which they find themselves unable to penetrate.

With how much more submiss and humble veneration

ought the methods of the Divine government to be beheld and adored, upon the certain assurance we have that all things therein are managed by that wisdom which could never in anything mistake its way: whereas there was never any continued administration of human government so accurate and exact, but that after some tract of time some or other errors might be reflected on therein.

Again, it may further be said, without presuming beyond due bounds, that though infinite congruities must be supposed to lie open to the Divine understanding which are concealed from ours, yet that these two things in the general are very manifestly congruous to any sober attentive mind, that directly concern or may be applied to the case under our present consideration; namely, that the course of God's government over the world be for the most part steady and uniform; not interrupted by very frequent, extraordinary, and anomalous actions; and again, that he use a royal liberty of stepping out of his usual course sometimes, as he sees meet.

It cannot but appear to such as attend, highly incongruous, should we affirm the antithesis to either of these; or lay down counter-positions to them, and suppose the course of the Divine government to be managed agreeably thereunto.

Section XXVI.

For, as to the *former:* what confusion would it make in the world, if there should be perpetual innovations upon nature; continual or exceeding frequent impeditions and restraints of second causes! In the sphere of *nature,* the virtues and proper qualities of things, being never certain, could never be understood or known; in that of *policy,* no measures so much as probable could ever be taken. How much better is it in both, that second causes ordinarily follow their inclinations? And why is it not to be thought congruous, that in some degree things should be proportionably so in the sphere of *grace?* Whereto by and by we shall speak more directly.

We pray, when our friends are sick, for their recovery: what can be the sober meaning and design of such prayers? Not that God would work a miracle for their restitution, for then we might as well pray for their revival after death; but that God would be pleased so to co-operate, in the still and silent way of nature, with second causes, and so bless means, that they may be recovered if he see good: otherwise that they and we may be prepared to undergo his pleasure. And agreeable hereto ought to be the intent of our prayers, in reference to the public affairs and better posture of the world.

And we may take notice the Divine wisdom lays a very great stress upon this matter,—the preserving of the common order of things,—and cannot but observe a certain inflexibleness of Providence herein, and that it is very little apt to divert from its wonted course; at which weak minds are apt to take offence: to wonder, that against so many prayers and tears God will let a good man die, or one whom they love; or that a miracle is not wrought to prevent their own being wronged at any time; or that the earth doth not open and swallow up the person that hath done them wrong: are apt to "call for fire from heaven," upon them that are otherwise minded, and do otherwise than they would have them. But a judicious person would consider, if it be so highly reasonable that my desires should be complied with so extraordinarily, then why not all men's? And then were the world filled with prodigies and confusion. The inconveniencies would soon be to all equally discernible and intolerable, as the heathen poet takes notice, should Jupiter's ear be over-easy; yea, and the impossibility were obvious of gratifying all, because of their many counter-desires.

And for the *other:* it were no less incongruous, if the Supreme Power should so tie its own hands and be so astricted to rules and methods, as never to do anything extraordinary upon never so important occasion. How ill could the world have wanted such an effort of omnipotency, as the restriction upon the flames from destroying Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! Or the miracles wrought in our Saviour's and

the next following days! Such things are never done, but when the all-comprehending wisdom sees it most congruous, and that the cause will over-recompense the deflexion from the common course. If no such thing did ever fall out, what a temptation were it to mankind, to introduce into their belief an unintelligent fate instead of a Deity; besides that the convincing testimony were wanting which we see is so necessary for the confirmation of any particular revelation from God, which comes not within the compass of nature's discovery; upon which account also it is as apparently necessary such extraordinary works should not be over-frequent; for then they become ordinary, and useless to that special end. So that here the exertions both of the ordinate and absolute power of God, as some distinguish, have their so appropriate and so visibly apt and congruous uses, that they are discernible to a very ordinary understanding; how much more to the infinite wisdom of God!

Section XXVII.

Now hereupon we say further, there is the like congruity, upon as valuable, though not altogether the same reasons, that in the affairs of grace there be somewhat correspondent: that ordinarily it be sought and expected in the use of ordinary means, and that sometimes its sovereignty show itself in preventing exertions; and in working so heroically, as none have beforehand in the neglect of its ordinary methods any reason to expect.

And we may fitly add that where sovereignty is pleased thus to have its exercise, and demonstrate itself, it is sufficient that there be a *general* congruity; that it do so sometimes, as an antecedent reason to the doing of *some* such extraordinary things: but that there should be a *particular* leading congruity or antecedent reason, to invite these extraordinary operations of grace to one person more than another, is not necessary. But it is most congruous that herein it be most arbitrary; most agreeable to the supremacy of God, to the state of sinful man who hath infinitely disobliged him and

can deserve nothing from him; yea, and even to the nature of the thing. For, where there is a parity in any objects of our own choice, there can be no leading reason to this rather than that. The most prudent man, that is wont to guide himself by never so exquisite wisdom in his daily actions, where there is a perfect indifferency between doing this thing or that, is not liable to censure that he is not able to give a reason why he did that, not the other. Wisdom hath no exercise in that case.

But that the blessed God doth ordinarily proceed in these affairs by a steady rule, and sometimes show his liberty of departing from it, is to be resolved into his infinite wisdom, it being in itself most fit he should do both the one and the other; and therefore to him most *necessary*. Whereupon the great apostle Saint Paul, discoursing upon this subject, doth not resolve the matter into strict justice nor absolute sovereignty,—both which have their place too in his proceedings with men, as the sacred writings do abundantly testify,—but we find him in a transport in the contemplation of the Divine wisdom that herein so eminently shines forth. "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"[1]

Section XXVIII.

To sum up all; we conclude it obvious to the apprehension of such as consider, that it was more congruous the general course of God's government over man should be by *moral* instruments. And howsoever it were very unreasonable to imagine that God cannot in any case extraordinarily oversway the inclinations and determine the will of such a creature, in a way agreeable enough to its nature,—though we particularly know not, as we are not concerned to know or curiously to inquire, in what way,—and highly reasonable to admit that in many cases he doth; it is notwithstanding manifest, to any sober reason, that it were very incongruous

[1] Rom. xi. 33. See to the same purpose chap. xvi. 25—27, and Eph. . 5—7, with the 8th.

this should be the ordinary course of his conduct towards mankind, or the same persons at all times: that is, that a whole order of intelligent creatures should be moved only by inward impulses; that God's precepts, promises, and comminations, whereof their nature is capable, should be all made impertinencies, through his constant overpowering those that should neglect them; that the faculties whereby men are capable of moral government, should be rendered, to this purpose, useless and vain; and that they should be tempted to expect to be constantly managed as mere machines, that know not their own use.

Nor is it less apprehensible how incongruous it were also, on the other hand, to suppose that the exterior frame of God's government should be totally unaccompanied with an internal vital energy, or exclude the inward motions, operations, and influences whereof such a creature is also fitly capable: or that God should have barred out himself from all inward access to the spirits of men, or commerce with them: that the supreme, universal, 'paternal mind,' as a heathen called it, should have no way for efficacious communications to his own offspring, when he pleases; that so, unsuitably to sovereignty, he should have no objects of special favour or no peculiar ways of expressing it.

It is manifestly congruous that the Divine government over man should be, as it is, mixed or composed of an external frame of laws with their proper sanctions and enforcements, and an internal effusion of power and vital influence correspondent to the several parts of that frame; and which might animate the whole, and use it, as instrumental, to the begetting of correspondent impressions on men's spirits:—that this power be put forth, not like that of a natural agent, *ad ultimum*,—which if we would suppose the Divine power to be, new worlds must be springing up every moment,—but *gradually*, and with an apt contemperation to the subject upon which it is designed to have its operations; and withal *arbitrarily*, as is becoming the great agent from whom it proceeds, and to whom it therefore belongs to measure its exertions as seems meet unto him:—that it be constantly

put forth (though most gratuitously, especially the disobligation of the apostasy being considered) upon all, to that degree as that they be *enabled* to do much good to which they are not *impelled* by it:—that it be ever ready, since it is the power of 'grace,' to go forth in a further degree than it had yet done, wheresoever any former issues of it have been duly complied with: though it be so little supposable that man should hereby have obliged God thereto, that He hath not any way obliged *himself*, otherwise than that he hath implied a readiness to impart unto man what shall be necessary to enable him to obey,—so far as upon the apostasy is requisite to his relief,—if he seriously endeavour to do his own part by the power he already hath received: agreeably to the common saying, *homini facienti quod in se est*, etc.:—that according to the royal liberty wherewith it works, it go forth, as to some, with that efficacy, as notwithstanding whatever resistance, yet to overcome, and make them captives to the authority and love of Christ.

Section XXIX.

The universal continued rectitude of all intelligent creatures had, we may be sure, been willed with a peremptory, efficacious will, if it had been best; that is, if it had not been less congruous than to keep them some time—under the expectation of future confirmation and reward—upon trial of their fidelity, and in a state wherein it might not be impossible to them to make a defection:—and so it had easily been prevented, that ever there should have been an apostasy from God, or any sin in the world.

Nor was it either less easy, by a mighty irresistible hand, universally to expel sin than prevent it; or more necessary or more to be expected from him. But if God's taking no such course tended to render his government over the world more august and awful for the present, and the result and final issue of all things more glorious at length, and were consequently more congruous, *that* could not be so willed as to be effectually procured by him.

For whatsoever obligation strict justice hath upon *us*, that

congruity cannot but have upon *him*. And whereas it would be concluded that whatsoever any one truly wills, they would effect if they could, we admit it for true and to be applied in the present case; but add, that as we rightly esteem that impossible to us which we cannot justly do, so is that to him, not only which he cannot do *justly*, but which, upon the whole matter, he cannot do most *wisely* also: that is, which his infinite wisdom doth not dictate is most congruous and fit to be done.

Things cohere and are held together, in the course of his dispensation, by congruities as by adamantine bands, and cannot be otherwise: that is, comparing and taking things together, especially the most important. For otherwise, to have been nicely curious about every minute thing, singly considered, that it might not possibly have been better, (as in the frame of this or that individual animal, or the like,) had been needlessly to interrupt the course of nature, and therefore itself to him an incongruity: and doth, in them that expect it, import more of a trifling disposition than of true wisdom.

But to him whose being is most absolutely perfect, to do that, which all things considered, would be simply best, that is, most becoming him, most honourable and God-like, is absolutely necessary; and consequently it is to be attributed to his infinite perfection, that unto him to do otherwise is absolutely impossible.

And if we yet see not all these congruities—which to him are more than a law—it is enough that they are obvious to his own eye, who is the only competent judge.

Yet moreover it is finally to be considered that the methods of the Divine government are, besides His, to be exposed to the view and judgment of other intellects than our own, and we expect they should to our own in another state. What conception thereof is already received and formed in our minds, is but an embryo, no less imperfect than our present state is.

It were very unreasonable to expect, since this world shall continue but a little while, that all God's managements and ways of procedure, in ordering the great affairs of it, should

be attempered and fitted to the judgment that shall be made of them in this temporary state, that will so soon be over; and to the present apprehension and capacity of our now so mudded and distempered minds. A vast and stable eternity remains, wherein the whole celestial chorus shall entertain themselves with the grateful contemplation and applause of his deep counsels. Such things as now seem perplex and intricate to us, will appear most irreprehensibly fair and comely to angelical minds; and our own, when we shall be vouchsafed a place amongst that happy community. What discovery God affords of his own glorious excellencies and perfections, is principally intended to recommend him in that state wherein he and all his ways and works are to be beheld with everlasting and most complacential approbation.

Therefore, though now we should covet the clearest and most satisfying account of things that can be had, we are yet to exercise patience, and not precipitate our judgment of them before the time: as knowing our present conceptions will differ more from what they will be hereafter, than those of a child from the maturer thoughts of the wisest man; and that many of our conceits, which we thought wise, we shall then see cause to "put away as childish things."

The disorder, sir, of this heap rather than frame of thoughts and discourse, as it cannot be thought more unsuitable to the subject than suitable to the author; and the less displease, by how much it could less be expected to be otherwise from *him*, even in the best circumstances; so it may lay some claim to your easier pardon, as having been mostly huddled up in the intervals of a troublesome long journey: wherein he was rather willing to take what opportunity the inconveniencies and hurry of it could allow him, than neglect any of using the earliest endeavour to approve himself, as he is your great admirer,

Most honoured sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

H. W.

A POSTSCRIPT TO THE LATE LETTER

OF THE

RECONCILABLENESS OF GOD'S PRESCIENCE, ETC.

FINDING that this discourse of the reconcilableness of God's prescience of the sins of men, with the wisdom and sincerity of his counsels, exhortations, etc., hath been misunderstood and misrepresented, I think it requisite to say somewhat briefly in reference thereto.

I wrote it upon the motion of that honourable gentleman to whom it is inscribed; who apprehended somewhat of that kind might be of use to render our religion less exceptionable to some persons of an inquiring disposition, that might perhaps be too sceptical and pendulous, if not prejudiced.

Having finished it, I thought it best the author's name should pass under some disguise, supposing it might so better serve its end. For knowing my name could not give the cause an advantage, I was not willing it should be in a possibility of making it incur any disadvantage; and therefore, as I have observed some, in such cases, to make use only of the two *last* letters, I imitated some other in the choice of the *penultimate*. But perceiving that discourse now to fall under animadversion, I reckon it becoming to be no longer concealed.

It was unavoidable to me,—if I would upon reasonable terms apply myself to the consideration of the matter I had undertaken, of showing the consistency of God's prescience

of the sins of men, with the preventive methods we find him to have used against them,—to express somewhat of my sense of, (what I well knew to have been asserted by divers schoolmen,) God's *predeterminative concurrence* to the sins of men also.

For it had been, any one may see, very idle and ludicrous trifling, to offer at reconciling those methods with God's prescience, and have waived that manifestly greater difficulty of reconciling them with his predeterminative concourse, if I had thought there had been such a thing: and were a like case as if a chirurgeon, undertaking a wounded person, should apply himself with a great deal of diligence and address to the cure of a finger slightly scratched, and totally neglect a wound feared to be mortal in his breast.

And whereas I reckoned God's prescience of all whatsoever futurities, and consequently of the sins of men, most certain and demonstrable, (though it was not the business of this discourse to demonstrate it; but supposing it, to show its reconcilableness with what it seemed not so well to agree,) if I had believed his predeterminative concurrence to the sins of men to be as certain, perfect despair of being able to say anything to purpose in this case had made me resolve to say nothing in either.

For, to show how it might stand with the wisdom and sincerity of the blessed God, to counsel men not to sin, to profess his hatred and detestation of it, to remonstrate to men the great danger they should incur by it; with so great appearance of seriousness to exhort, warn, expostulate with them concerning it, express his great displeasure and grief for their sinning, and consequent miseries; and yet all the while act them on thereto by a secret but mighty and irresistible influence,—seemed to me an utterly hopeless and impossible undertaking: the other, without this, (supposing as to this the case to have been as some have thought it,) a very vain one.

But being well assured that what seemed the greater difficulty, and to carry most of terror and affright in the face of it, was only a chimera, I reckoned the other very superable,

and therefore directed my discourse thither according to the first design of it, which was in effect but to justify God's making such a creature as man and governing him agreeably to his nature.

Now, judging it requisite that he who should read that discourse concerning this designed subject with any advantage, should have the same thoughts of the other, which was waved, that I had; I apprehended it necessary to communicate those thoughts concerning that, as I did: not operosely, and as my business, but only on the by, and as was fit in reference to a thing that was to be waved, and not insisted on.

Now I perceive that some persons who had formerly entertained that strange opinion of God's predeterminative concurrence to the wickedest actions, and not purged their minds of it, have been offended with that 'Letter,' for not expressing more respect unto it: and yet offered nothing themselves,—which to me seems exceeding strange,—for the solving of that great difficulty and encumbrance which it infers upon our religion.

Nor do I much wonder that this opinion of 'predeterminative concourse to sinful actions' should have some stiff adherents among ourselves. For having been entertained by certain Dominicans, that were apprehended in some things to approach nearer us, than others of the Roman Church; it came to receive favour and countenance from some of our own, of considerable note for piety and learning, whose name and authority cannot but be expected to have much influence on the minds of many.

But I somewhat wonder that they who have had no kindness for this 'Letter,' upon the account of its dissent from them in this particular, should not allow it *common justice*. For because it hath not said everything they would have had it say, and that would have been grateful to themselves, they impute to it the having said what it said not, and what they apprehended would be most ungrateful to all pious and sober men.

The sum is, they give out concerning it that it denies the

providence of God about sin, which all good men ought to abhor from; and insinuate that it falls in with the sentiments of Durandus, which they know many think not well of.

All that I intend to do for the present upon this occasion shall be to show wherein the 'Letter' is misrepresented, and charged with what it hath not in it; to remark what is said against that *supposed* sense of it, and give the *true* sense of what it says touching this matter; with a further account of the author's mind herein, than it was thought fit to insert into so transient and occasional a discourse as that part of the 'Letter' was; whereby it may be seen wherein he agrees with those of that opposite persuasion, and what the very point of difference is. Further than this I yet intend not to go, till I see further need.

There have two discourses come to my view, that have referred to that 'Letter:' the one in manuscript only; which, —because it is uncertain to me whether the reputed author of it will own it or no, and because it says little or nothing by way of argument against the true sense of the 'Letter,'—I shall take no further present notice of. The other is printed, and offers at somewhat of argument; which therefore I shall more attentively consider.

It doth this 'Letter' an honour whereof its author never had the least ambition or expectation, to insert the mention of it into the close of a very learned elaborate work,[1] with which it might yet easily be imagined its simplicity and remoteness from any pretence to learning would so ill agree, that a quarrel could not but ensue. It is from one who, having spent a great part of his time in travelling through some regions of literature, and been peaceable, as far as I have understood, in his travels, it might have been hoped would have let this pamphlet alone; when, for what I can observe, he finds no fault with it but what he makes, and is fain to accuse it of what is nowhere to be found in it, lest it should be innocent.

[1] *Court of the Gentiles*, Part II. p. 522.

It is an unaccountable pleasure which men of some humours take in depraving what is done by others, when there is nothing attempted that doth interfere with them; nothing that can righteously be understood to cross any good end which they more openly pretend to, nor the more concealed end, if they have any such, of their own glory.

Common edification seems less designed, when everything must be thrown down which is not built by their own hands, or by their own line and measure.

I plead nothing of merit in this little essay: only I say for it, that I know not what it can be guilty of towards this learned man that can have occasioned this assault upon it by his pen; by how much the less it keeps his road, the more I might have thought it out of the way of his notice. I am sure it meant him no harm, nor had any design to pilfer from him any part of his collections.

But he says, 'he may not let it pass:' then there is no remedy. But I wonder what he should mean by *he may not*. It must either mean that he thought it unlawful to let it pass, or that he had a mighty strong and irresistible inclination to squabble a little with it. The former cannot be imagined: for then, for the same reason, he would have attempted sundry others of former and later days, that have said much to the purpose which this letter doth but touch, *obiter* and on the bye, in its way to another design. But those were giants, whom it was not so safe to meddle with: therefore he could very wisely 'let them pass,' though they have wounded his beloved cause beyond all that it is in the power of his or any art to cure.

Whence it is consequent that the whole business must be resolved into the latter: and this inclination cannot but owe itself to some peculiar aspect and reference he had to the author; whom, though he was in *incognito*, yet, as I have been informed, he professes to have discoursed with upon the same subject many times: and so therefore he might once more, *before* this public rencounter, if he had thought fit, and nature could have been repelled awhile.

It is true he hath found me not facile to entertain his sentiments in this matter; and indeed I have deeply dreaded the portentous imaginations which I found had more lightly tinctured his mind, as to this thing, concerning the blessed God,—than which, upon deliberation, I do believe no human wit can ever devise worse: as I have often freely told divers of my friends, and it is very likely, among them, himself: though I do not suspect the contagion to have infected his vitals; by a privilege vouchsafed to some, that they may possibly drink some deadly thing that shall not hurt them.

But why must an impatiency of this dissent break out into so vindictive a hostility? I will not say I expected more *friendly* dealing. For as I do well know it was very possible such a public contest might have been managed with that candour and fairness as not at all to intrench upon friendship; so, as it is, I need not own so much weakness as upon many years' experience not to be able to distinguish and understand there are some tempers less capable of the ingenuities that belong to that pleasant relation.

But it was only a charitable error, of which I repent not, that I expected a more *righteous* dealing. He pretends to give my sense in other words, and then gravely falls to combating his own man of straw, which he will have represent me, and so I am to be tortured in *effigy*.

'It can never be proved that it implies a contradiction for God to make a creature, which should be capable of acting without immediate concourse.'

This he puts in a different character, as if I had said so much.

And why might not my own words be allowed to speak my own sense, but that his understanding and eyes must then have conspired to tell him that the sense would have been quite another? It is only a 'predeterminative concurrence to all actions, even those that are most malignantly wicked;'[1] and again, 'God's concurring by a determinative influence unto wicked actions,'[2] which is the only thing I speak of as what I cannot reconcile with the *wisdom* and

[1] Sect. vi. p. 16.

[2] Sect. vii. p. 17.

sincerity of his counsels and exhortations against such actions.

And if he had designed to serve any common good end in this undertaking of his, why did he not attempt to reconcile them himself? But the wisdom and sincerity of God are thought fit, as it would seem, to be sacrificed to the reputation of his more peculiarly admired schoolmen. If there be such an universal determination, by an irresistible divine influence, to all even the wickedest actions (which God forbid!) methinks such a difficulty should not be so easily passed over. And surely the reconciling such a 'determinative influence' with the Divine wisdom and sincerity had been a performance worth all his learned labours besides, and of greater service to the Christian name and honour.

But it seems the denying 'concurrence' by such 'predetermining influence,' is the denying of *all* immediate concurrence: and I am sent to the Thomists, Scotists, Jesuits, and Suarez more especially, to be taught otherwise; as if all these were for 'determinative concourse:' which is very pleasant, when the very heads of the two first-mentioned sects were against it, as we shall see further anon; the third generally, and Suarez particularly, whom he names, have so industriously and strongly opposed it. Yea, and because I assent not to the doctrine of 'predeterminative concourse,' I am represented (which was the last spite that was to be done me) as a favourer of the hypothesis of Durandus; and he might as truly have said of Henry Nicholas, but not so prudently, because he knows whose opinions have a nearer alliance to that family.

Now I heartily wish I had a ground for so much charity towards him as to suppose him ignorant that 'immediate concourse,' and 'determinative,' are not wont to be used by the schoolmen in this controversy as terms of the same signification. If he do himself think them to be all one, what warrant is that to him to give the same for *my* sense? when it is so well known they are not commonly so taken, and that 'determinative concourse' is so voluminously written

against, where 'immediate' is expressly asserted. Let him but soberly tell me what his design was, to dash out the word 'determining' from what he recites of that letter, and put in 'immediate,' which he knows is not to be found in any of the places he refers to in it: or what was the spring of that confidence that made him intimate the Scotists, Thomists, the Jesuits, and particularly Suarez, to be against what is said in the 'Letter' in this thing? If he could procure all the books in the world to be burnt besides those in his own library, he would yet have a hard task to make it be believed in the next age, that all these were for *God's efficacious determination of the wills of men unto wicked actions.*

I need not, after all this, concern myself as to what he says about the 'no medium' between the extremes of his disjunctive proposition: 'Either the human will must depend upon the divine independent will of God,' etc.—as he phrases it in the excess of his caution, lest any should think the 'will of God' was *not* a divine will—'or God must depend on the human will,' etc. unless he can show that the human will cannot be said to depend on the Divine, as being enabled by it, except it be also determined and impelled by it, to every wicked action. A created being that was entirely from God, with all the powers and faculties which belong to it; that hath its continual subsistence in him, and all those powers continued and maintained by his influence every moment; that hath those powers made habile and apt for whatsoever its most natural motions and operations, by a suitable influence whensoever it moves or operates: can this creature be said not to *depend* as to all its motions and operations, unless it be also unavoidably *impelled* to do everything to which it is thus sufficiently enabled?

I again say; was it impossible to God to make such a creature that can in this case act or not act? It is here oddly enough said, 'That the author gives no demonstration hereof.' Of what? Why that 'it can never be proved' (as the reference to the foregoing word shows) 'that it implies a contradiction,' etc. It seems it was expected that author

should have *proved* by demonstration that it can *never be proved*, that it implies a contradiction for God to make a creature, which should be capable of acting (as he feigns him to have said) without immediate concourse. By what rule of reasoning was he obliged to do so? But if the proving there is such a creature as, in the case before expressed, can act without *determinative* concourse, will serve turn to prove that it cannot be proved it implies a contradiction there should be such a one, I may think the thing was done: and may think it sufficiently proved, that there is such a creature, if it appear —whereof there is too much proof—that there are such actions done by creatures, as for the reasons that were before alleged it could not stand with the nature of God to determine them unto.

And was nothing said tending to prove this,—that it could not consist with the nature of God to determine men unto all the wicked actions they commit? It seems unless it were put into mood and figure, it is no proof. Nor was it the design of those papers to insist upon that subject; but there are things suggested *in transitu*, as such a discourse could admit, that, whether they are demonstrative or no, would puzzle a considering person: 'That God should have as much influence and concurrence to the worst actions as to the best:' 'as much or more than the sinner or the tempter:' 'that the matter of his laws to Adam, and his posterity, should be a natural impossibility:' and I now add, the 'irreconcilableness of that determination with God's wisdom and sincerity;' etc. These I shall reckon demonstrations, till I see them well answered.

However, if mine were a bad opinion, why was it not as confutable without the mention of Durandus? But that was with him an odious name, and fit therefore to impress the brand which he desired I should wear for his sake. This is a likely way to clear the truth! Yet if it serve not one design, it will another, he thinks, upon which he was more intent.

Are all for Durandus's way that are against a 'predeterminative influence' to wicked actions? I could tell him who

have shown more strength in arguing against Durandus, than I find in all his arguments; who yet have written too against determinative concourse to such actions, more than ever he will be able to answer, or any man.

The truth is, when I wrote that 'Letter,' I had never seen Durandus: nor indeed did I consult any book for the writing of it—as I had not opportunity, if I had been so inclined—except, upon some occasions, the Bible: not apprehending it necessary to number votes, and consider how many men's thoughts were one way and how many the other, before I would venture to think any of my own. But I have this day, upon the view of his animadversions, taken a view of Durandus too: and really cannot yet guess what should tempt him to parallel my conceptions with Durandus's, but that he took his for somewhat an ill-favoured name. Durandus flatly, in several places, denies God's immediate concourse to the actions of the creatures,[1] which I never said or thought: but do really believe his immediate concourse to all actions of his creatures, both *immediatione virtutis* and *suppositi*, (that I may more comply with his scholastic humour, in the use of such terms, than gratify my own,) yet not 'determinative unto wicked actions.'

Again; Durandus denies immediate concourse universally, and upon such a ground as whereupon the denial must equally extend to good actions as to bad; namely, 'that it is impossible the same numerical action should be from two or more agents immediately and perfectly, except the same numerical virtue should be in each. But he says, 'the same numerical virtue cannot be in God and in the creature,'[2] etc. Whereas he[3] well knows the concourse or influence (for I here affect not the curiosity to distinguish these two terms, as some do) which I deny not to be immediate to any actions, I only deny to be *determinative* as to those which are wicked.

Yea, and the authors he quotes (sec. 11), Aquinas and Scotus, though everybody may know they are against what

[1] L. 2, dist. 1, q. 5; dist. 37, q. 1.

[2] Dist. 1, q. 5, ut supr.

[3] Howe's Critic, Gale. *Ed.*

was the notion of Durandus, yet are as much against himself, if he will directly oppose that 'Letter,' and assert determinative concourse to wicked actions. They held immediate concourse, not determinative. The former, though he supposes Divine help in reference to the elections of the human will, yet asserts the elections themselves to be in man's own power, and only says, that in the executions of those elections men can be hindered: that (whatsoever influence he asserts of the first cause) men still *habent se indifferenter ad bene vel male eligendum.*[1] The other, though he also excludes not the immediate efficiency of God in reference to the actions of men, yet is so far from making it determinative, that the reason he gives why, in evil actions, man sins, and God doth not, is that the one of those causes *posset rectitudinem dare actui quam tenetur dare: et tamen non dat.* Alia *autem, licet non teneatur eam dare; tamen quantum est ex se daret, si voluntas creata co-operaretur;*[2]—in the very place which himself refers to: wherein they differ from this author *toto cœlo;* and from me, in that they make not determinative influence necessary in reference to good actions, which I expressly do.

Thus far it may be seen what pretence or colour he had to make my opinion the same with Durandus's, or his own the same with that of Thomas and Scotus.

But if he knew in what esteem I have the schoolmen, he would hardly believe me likely to step one foot out of my way, either to gain the reputation of any of their names or avoid the disreputation.

He notwithstanding supposed his own reputation to be so good,—and I know no reason why he might not suppose so,—as to make it be believed I was anything he pleased to call me, by such as had not opportunity to be otherwise informed.

And thus I would take leave of him, and permit him to use his own reflections upon his usage of me at his own leisure, but that civility bids me, since he is pleased to be at the pains of catechising me, first to give some answer to the questions wherein he thus expostulates with me.

[1] L. 2, q. 83.

[2] L. 2, dist. 27, q. 2.

Question 1. 'Whether there be any action of man on earth so good, which hath not some mixture of sin in it? And if God concur to the substrate matter of it as good, must he not necessarily concur to the substrate matter as sinful? For is not the substrate matter of the act, both as good and sinful, the same?'

Answer 1. It seems then, that God doth concur to the matter of an action *as* sinful; which is honestly acknowledged, since by his principles it cannot be denied; though most of his way mince the business, and say the concurrence is only to the action which is sinful, not as sinful.

2. This I am to consider as an argument for God's predeterminative concurrence to wicked actions. And thus it must be conceived:—that if God concur by determinative influence to the imperfectly good actions of faith, repentance, love to himself, prayer: therefore to the acts of enmity against himself, cursing, idolatry, blasphemy, etc. And is it not a mighty consequence,—if to actions that are good *quoad substantiam*, therefore to such as are in the *substance* of them evil? We ourselves can in a remoter kind concur to the actions of others. Because you may afford yourself your leading concurrence to actions imperfectly good, therefore may you to them that are downright evil? because to prayer, therefore to cursing and swearing? and then ruin men for the actions you induced them to? You will say, God may rather; but sure he can much less do so than you. How could you be serious in the proposal of this question?

We are at a loss how it should consist with the Divine wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth, to design the punishing man, yet innocent, with everlasting torments, for actions which God himself would irresistibly move him to; whereas His making a covenant with Adam in reference to himself and his posterity implied there was a possibility it might be kept; at least that He would not make the keeping of it, by his own positive influence, impossible. And you say, 'If He might concur to the substrate matter of an action as good,'—which tends to man's salvation and blessedness,—He must

necessarily concur,—and that by an irresistible determinative influence, else you say nothing to me,—to the substrate matter of all their evil actions *as* evil, which tend to their ruin and misery, brought upon them by the actions which God makes them do! I suppose St. Luke, vi. 9, with Hos. xiii. 9, show a difference. If you therefore ask me, why I should not admit this consequence? I say, it needs no other answer than that I take wisdom, righteousness, goodness, and truth, to belong more to the idea of God, than their contraries.

Question 2. 'Is there any action so sinful, that hath not some natural good as the substrate matter thereof?'

Answer. True. And what shall be inferred? That therefore God must by a determinative influence produce every such action, whatsoever reason there be against it? You might better argue thence the necessity of his producing every hour a new world; in which there would be a great deal more of positive entity and natural goodness. Certainly the natural goodness that is in the entity of an action is no such invitation to the holy God by determinative influence to produce it, as that he should offer violence to his own nature and stain the justice and honour of his government, by making it be done, and then punish it being done.

Question 3. 'Do we not cut off the most illustrious part of Divine Providence in governing the lower world?' etc.

Answer. What! by denying that it is the stated way of God's government to urge men irresistibly to all that wickedness, for which he will afterwards punish them with everlasting torments? I should least of all ever have expected such a question to this purpose, and am ashamed further to answer it. Only name any act of Providence I hereby deny, if you can.

In the next place; that my sense may appear in my own words, and that I may show *how far* I am of the same mind with those that apprehend me at so vast a distance from them; and where, if they go further, our parting point must be; I shall set down the particulars of my agreement with

them, and do it in no other heads than they might have collected, if they had pleased, out of that 'Letter.' As,

1. That God exerciseth a universal providence about all his creatures, both in sustaining and governing them.

2. That more particularly he exerciseth such a providence about man.

3. That his providence about man extends to all the actions of all men.

4. That it consists not alone in beholding the actions of men, as if he were a mere spectator of them only, but is positively active about them.

5. That this active providence of God about all the actions of men consists not merely in giving them the natural powers whereby they can work of themselves, but in a real influence upon those powers.

6. That this influence is, in reference to holy and spiritual actions, whereto since the apostasy the nature of man is become viciously disinclined, necessary to be *efficaciously determinative;* such as shall overcome that disinclination, and reduce those powers into act.

7. That the ordinary appointed way for the communication of this determinative influence, is by our intervening consideration of the inducements which God represents to us in his word; namely, the precepts, promises, and comminations, which are the moral instruments of his government. No doubt but he may, as is intimated in the 'Letter,'[1] extraordinarily act men in some rarer cases by inward impulse, without the help of such external means, as he did prophets or inspired persons; and when he hath done so, we were not to think he treated them unagreeably to their natures, or so as their natures could not without violence admit. But it hath been the care and designment of the Divine wisdom so to order the way of dispensation towards the several sorts of creatures, as not only not ordinarily to impose upon them what they could not conveniently be patient of, but so as that their powers and faculties might be put upon the

[1] Sect. xxviii. p. 54.

exercises whereof they were capable; and to provide that neither their *passive* capacity should be overcharged, nor their *active* be unemployed.

And whereas the reasonable nature of man renders him not only susceptible of unexpected internal impressions, but also capable of being governed by laws, which require the use of his own endeavour to understand and obey them; and whereas we also find such laws are actually made for him and propounded to him with their proper enforcements;—if it should be the fixed course of God's government over him, only to guide him by inward impulses, this (as is said in that 'Letter'[1]) would render those laws and their sanctions impertinencies; his faculties whereby he is capable of moral government, so far and to this purpose useless and vain: and would be an occasion, which the depraved nature of men would be very apt to abuse into a temptation to them, never to bend their powers to the endeavour of doing anything that were of a holy and spiritual tendency (from which their aversion would be always prompting them to devise excuses) more than a mere machine would apply itself to the uses which it was made for, and doth not understand.

Therefore lest any should be so unreasonable as to expect God should only surprise them while they resolvedly sit still and sleep, he hath in his infinite wisdom withheld from them the occasion thereof; and left them destitute of any encouragement, whatsoever his extraordinary dealings may have been with some, to expect his influences in the neglect of his ordinary methods, as is discoursed p. 35, and at large in the following pages:[2] and which is the plain sense of that admonition, Phil. ii. 12, 13. Yea, and though there be never so many instances of merciful surprisals, preventive of all our own consideration and care, yet those are still to be accounted the *ordinary* methods which are so *de jure;* which would actually be so, if men did their duty; and which God hath obliged us to observe and attend unto *as such.*

8. That in reference to all other actions which are not sinful,—though there be not a sinful disinclination to them,—

[1] Page 54, Sec. xxviii. [2] Secs. xvii. xviii.

yet because there may be a sluggishness and inaptitude to some purposes God intends to serve by them, this influence is also always determinative thereunto; whensoever to the immense wisdom of God it shall seem meet, and conducing to his own great and holy ends.

9. That in reference to *sinful* actions, by this influence God doth not only sustain men who do them, and continue to them their natural faculties and powers whereby they are done; but also, as the first mover, so far excite and actuate those powers as that they are apt and habile for any congenerous action to which they have a natural designation, and whereto they are not sinfully disinclined.

10. That if men do then employ them to the doing of any sinful action; by that same influence, he doth, as to him seems meet, limit, moderate, and,—against the inclination and design of the sinful agent,—overrule and dispose it to good.

But now, if besides all this, they will also assert, that 'God doth by an efficacious influence move and determine men to wicked actions,'—this is that which I most resolvedly deny.

That is, in this I shall differ with them, that I do not suppose God to have, by internal influence, as far a hand in the worst and wickedest actions as in the best.

I assert more to be necessary to actions to which men are wickedly disinclined; but that less will suffice for their doing of actions to which they have inclination more than enough. I reckon it sufficient to the production of this latter sort of actions, that their powers be actually habile and apt for any such action in the general as is connatural to them,—supposing there be not a peccant aversion, as there is to all those actions that are holy and spiritual; which aversion a more potent, even a determinative influence is necessary to overcome. I explain myself by instance.

A man hath from God the powers belonging to his nature, by which he is capable of loving or hating an apprehended good or evil: these powers being by a present Divine influence rendered habile, and apt for action, he can now love

a good name, health, ease, life ; and hate disgrace, sickness, pain, death : but he doth also by these powers thus habilitated for action, love wickedness and hate God. I say now, that to those *former* acts God should over and besides determine him, is not absolutely and always necessary, and to the *latter*, is impossible; but that to hate wickedness universally and as such, and to love God,—the depravedness of his nature by the apostacy hath made the determinative influence of efficacious grace necessary : which therefore he hath indispensable obligation (nor is destitute of encouragement) earnestly to implore and pray for. My meaning is now plain to such as have a mind to understand it.

Having thus given an account wherein I agree with them, and wherein, if they please, I must differ, it may perhaps be expected I should add further reasons of that difference on my part: but I shall for the present forbear to do it.

I know it may be alleged that some very pious as well as learned men have been of their opinion ; and I seriously believe it. But that signifies nothing to the goodness of the opinion. Nor doth the badness of it extinguish my charity, nor reverence, towards the men. For I consider that as many hold the most important truths, and which most directly tend to impress the image of God upon their souls, that yet are never stamped with any such impression thereby; so it is not impossible some may have held very dangerous opinions with a notional judgment, the pernicious influence whereof hath never distilled upon their hearts.

Neither shall I be willing without necessity to detect other men's infirmities. Yet if I find myself any way obliged further to intermeddle in this matter, I reckon the time I have to spend in this world can never be spent to better purpose than in discovering the fearful consequences of that rejected opinion ; the vanity of the subterfuges whereby its assertors think to hide the malignity of it ; and the inefficacy of the arguments brought for it, especially those two which the 'Letter' takes notice of.

For as so ill-coloured an opinion ought never to be

admitted without the most apparent necessity, so do I think it most apparent there is no necessity it should be admitted upon those grounds or any other: and doubt not but that both the governing providence of God in reference to all events whatsoever, and his most certain foreknowledge of them all, may be defended against all opposers without it.

But I had rather my preparations to these purposes should be buried in dust and silence, than I should ever see the occasion which should carry the signification with it of their being at all needful. And I shall take it for a just and most deplorable occasion, if I shall find any to assert against me the contradictory to this proposition:

'That God doth not by an efficacious influence universally move and determine men to all their actions; even those that are most wicked:' which is the only true and plain meaning of what was said, about this business, in the before-mentioned 'Letter.'

A CALM AND SOBER INQUIRY

CONCERNING THE POSSIBILITY OF

A TRINITY IN THE GODHEAD,

IN A LETTER TO A PERSON OF WORTH;

OCCASIONED BY THE

LATELY PUBLISHED CONSIDERATIONS ON THE EXPLICATIONS ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY, BY DR. WALLIS, DR. SHERLOCK, DR. S——TH, DR. CUDWORTH, ETC.

TOGETHER WITH CERTAIN LETTERS,

FORMERLY WRITTEN TO THE REV. DR. WALLIS, ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

AN INQUIRY CONCERNING THE POSSIBILITY OF A TRINITY IN THE GODHEAD.

Sir,—I intend not this discourse shall be concerned in what this author hath said of the several explications given by the persons named on his title-page. The only thing it is designed for, is the discoursing with him that single point which he refers to in his twenty-ninth and thirtieth pages; and which, in this controversy, is on all hands confessed to be the cardinal one; namely, Whether a trinity in the Godhead be possible or no?

I put not the question about three persons; both because I will not, in so short a discourse as I intend to make this, be engaged in discussing the unagreed notion of a *person*, and because the Scripture lays not that necessity upon me; though I do not think the use of that term, in this affair, either blameable or indefensible. But I shall inquire whether the Father, the Son, or Word, and the Holy Ghost, cannot possibly admit of sufficient distinction from one another to answer the parts and purposes severally assigned them by the Scripture in the Christian economy, and yet be each of them God, consistently with this most inviolable and indubitable truth,—that there can be but one God.

This author concludes it to be impossible in the mentioned pages of his discourse, and thereupon seems to judge it necessary that two of them be excluded the Godhead; as many others,—some going the Arian, some the Photinian, more lately called the Socinian way,—have done before him. He acknowledges there may be 'some secret unrevealed by

God, because it was above human capacity to discover it; and sometimes also to comprehend how it can be;' but adds, 'there is a vast difference between my not being able to conceive how a thing should be, and a clear apprehension and sight that it cannot be.'[1] What he says thus far is unexceptionable, and I heartily concur with him in it. But for what he subjoins, (wherein he might have spoken his mind of the matter in controversy with as much advantage to his cause without reflecting upon his adversaries, as if they considered these things either with no intention or with no sincerity, not allowing them even the never so little of the one or the other,) that 'three distinct Almighty and All-knowing persons should be but one Almighty, or but one All-knowing, or but one God,—a man, who considers with never so little intention and sincerity, clearly sees that it cannot be. In short, that it is not a mystery, but, as Dr. South speaks, an absurdity and a contradiction.' This is that I would consider with him, if he will affix these words of his,—'a man who considers, etc., clearly sees it cannot be, and it is an absurdity and a contradiction,'—to the question as I have set it down above. In the meantime he cannot be ignorant that, as he hath represented the matter, he hath here either not truly, or at least not fairly, given the sense of any of them whom he pretended to oppose.

For when by those words,—'But that three Divine persons, or that three distinct Almighty and All-knowing persons, should be but one Almighty, but one All-knowing, or but one God,'—he would slily insinuate to his unwary and less attentive reader, that the same men held three Almighties, and but one; he well knows, and elsewhere confesses, (though he might suppose that some readers would not be at leisure to compare one place of his writings with another, but hastily run away with the apprehension that such as were not of his mind spake nothing but nonsense and contradictions,) that not only his later opposers since P. Lombard, as he speaks, but divers much more ancient, as Athanasius and

[1] Page 30, col. 1.

the rest of the Nicene fathers, etc., denied three Almighties, though they affirmed each of the persons to be Almighty; understanding omnipotency, as they do omniscience, to be an attribute not of the person as such, but of the essence as such, which they affirm to be but one; that is, that they are each of them Almighty, by communication in one and the same almighty essence. And if their sentiment be so very absurd, he needed the less to fear representing it as it is.

And the other who seems to grant three Almighties, doth never say there is but *one* Almighty, though such say too there is but one *God*,—placing the unity of the Godhead in somewhat else, as he hath himself taken notice; which is remote from express self-contradiction also. But I shall concern myself no further about the one or the other of these ways of explaining the doctrine of the three persons: only shall inquire concerning the possibility of such a trinity in the Godhead as was above expressed; requiting the uncharitableness of this author in imputing carelessness or insincerity to all that think it possible, with so much charity as to believe he would not, against the plain tenour of Scripture, have rejected the doctrine of the Trinity,—as he professes to do that of the incarnation,—if he had not thought it every way impossible. And here I premise,

1. That the present undertaking is not to show that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three, and but one, in the same respect; which I would adventure, in this author's words, to say, no man that considers with never so little intention and sincerity would offer at: but when they are supposed to be but *one* in respect of Deity, they are thought to be *three* in some other respect.

2. That what I now design is only to represent this matter as *possible* to be, some way, and in the way here proposed for aught we know; not as definitely certain to be this way or that. The former is enough to our present purpose: that is, if any way it can be conceived, without absurdity or contradiction, that these may be three with sufficient distinction to found the distinct attributes which the Scriptures do

severally give them,—so as some things may be affirmed of some one, and not be affirmed of the other of them, and yet their unity in Godhead be conserved,—our point is gained; and the clamour of this and every other opposer ought to cease, for our asserting what 'every one, that considers clearly, sees cannot be.'

Now, so much being forelaid that we may proceed with clearness and satisfaction of mind;—if we would understand whether it be possible that these three may be sufficiently distinguished for the mentioned purpose, and yet be one in Godhead or in Divine Being; we are to recollect ourselves, and consider what we are wont, and find ourselves indispensably obliged, to conceive of that ever-blessed Being, and what is with less certainty or evidence said or thought of it. Therefore,—

I. We cannot but acknowledge, that whereas we do with greatest certainty and clearness conceive of it as an intellectual Being, comprehensive, with that, of infinite and universal perfection; so we do, most expressly,—though this be implied in universal perfection,—conclude it a Being most necessarily existent: which God hath himself been pleased to signify to us by the appropriated name, 'I am,' or 'I am what I am.'

Hereby is this most excellent of beings infinitely distinguished from all creatures, or from the whole creation. All created being is merely contingent; that is, according to the true notion of contingency, dependent upon will and pleasure. So he hath himself taught us to distinguish; and with such distinction to conceive of the creation,[1] "Thou hast made all things, and for" (or by, διὰ) "thy pleasure" (or will, θέλημά σου) "they are and were created." Whatsoever being is necessarily existent, the excellency of its nature being such as that it was necessary to it to exist, or impossible not to exist, is God, or is Divine being. Notwithstanding what some have imagined of necessary matter, we might adventure to affirm this universally of all necessary being, that it is Divine; taking it to be plainly demonstrable,

[1] Rev. iv. 11.

and to have been demonstrated beyond all contradiction by the learned Dr. Cudworth and many others long before him: and doubt not to evince, (though that is not the present business,) that supposing the imagination of necessary matter were true, this sensible world could never possibly have been made of it, by any power whatsoever; the only pretence for which it is imagined. But if any have a mind to make this a dispute,—to avoid being unseasonably involved in it at this time, it will serve my present purpose to assert only, Whatsoever intellectual being is necessarily existent is Divine.

And on the other hand, whatsoever being is contingent; that is, such as that it depended on a mere intervening act of will, namely, even the sovereign and supreme will, whether it should be or not be, is created, or is creature.

II. Whatsoever simplicity the ever-blessed God hath by any express revelation claimed to himself, or can by evident and irrefragable reason be demonstrated to belong to him as a perfection, we ought humbly, and with all possible reverence and adoration, to ascribe to him. But such simplicity as he hath not claimed; as is arbitrarily ascribed to him by over-bold and adventurous intruders into the deep and most profound *arcana* of the Divine nature; such as can never be proved to belong to him, or to be any real perfection; such as would prove an imperfection and a blemish, would render the Divine nature less intelligible, more impossible to be so far conceived as is requisite; as would decompose and disturb our minds, confound our conceptions, make our apprehensions of his other known perfections less distinct, or inconsistent; render him less adorable, or less an object of religion; or such as is manifestly unreconcilable with his plain affirmations concerning himself, we ought not to impose it upon ourselves, or be so far imposed upon, as to ascribe to him such simplicity.

It would be an over-officious and too meanly servile religiousness, to be awed by the sophistry of presumptuous scholastic wits into a subscription to their confident determinations concerning the being of God; that such and such things are

necessary or impossible thereto, beyond what the plain undisguised reason of things or his own express word do evince. To imagine a sacredness in their rash conclusions, so as to be afraid of searching into them or of examining whether they have any firm and solid ground or bottom; to allow the schools the making of our Bible or the forming of our creed, who license and even sport themselves to philosophize upon the nature of God with as petulant and irreverent a liberty as they would upon a worm or any of the meanest insect,—while yet they can pronounce little with certainty even concerning *that*,—hath nothing in it either of the Christian or the man. It will become as well as concern us, to disencumber our minds, and release them from the entanglements of their unproved dictates, whatsoever authority they may have acquired only by having been long, and commonly, taken for granted. The more reverence we have of God, the less we are to have for such men as have themselves expressed little.

III. Such as have thought themselves obliged by the plain word of God to acknowledge a trinity in the Godhead, namely, of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; but withal to diminish the distinction of the one from the other so as even to make it next to nothing, by reason of the straits into which unexamined maxims have cast their minds concerning the Divine *simplicity;* have yet not thought that to be absolute or omnimodous. For the allowing of three *somewhats* in the Divine nature—and what less could have been said?—cannot consist with absolute simplicity in all respects, inasmuch as they cannot be three without differing, in some respects, from one another.

Since therefore there is a necessity apprehended of acknowledging three such 'somewhats' in the Godhead, both because the word of God,—who best understands his own nature,—doth speak of three in it so plainly, that without notorious violence it cannot be understood otherwise, and because it affirms some things of one or other of them, which it affirms not of the rest; it will therefore be *neces-*

sary to admit a true distinction between them, otherwise they cannot be *three;* and *safe* to say there is so much as is requisite to found the distinct affirmations which we find in God's word concerning this or that apart from the other, otherwise we shall, in effect, deny what God affirms; and *modest* to confess that how great the distinction is, with precise and particular limitation, we do not know nor dare be curious to determine or inquire: only that as it cannot be less than is sufficient to sustain distinct predicates or attributions, so it cannot be so great as to intrench upon the unity of the Godhead: which limits, on the one hand and the other, God hath himself plainly set us.

IV. Therefore since we may offend very highly by an arrogant pretence to the knowledge we have not, but shall not offend by confessing the ignorance which we cannot and therefore need not remedy, we should abstain from confident conclusions in the dark and at random, especially concerning the nature of God; and for instance, from saying, 'We clearly see a sufficient distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit, in the Godhead cannot be, or is impossible.' It expresses too little reverence of God, as if his being had any, or so narrow, limits as to be presently seen through; an over-magnifying opinion of ourselves, as if our eye could penetrate that vast and sacred darkness, or the glorious light, equally impervious to us, wherein God dwells; too great rudeness to the rest of men,—more than implicitly representing all mankind besides as stark blind, who can discern nothing of what we pretend clearly to see!

And it is manifest this cannot be said to be impossible upon any other pretence, but that it consists not with the unity of the Godhead in opposition to the multiplication thereof; or with that simplicity which stands in opposition to the concurrence of all perfections therein, with distinction greater than hath been commonly thought to belong to the Divine nature. For the former, we are at a certainty: but for the latter, how do we know what the original, natural state of the Divine Being is in this respect? or what

simplicity belongs to it? or what it may contain or comprehend in it, consistently with the unity thereof? or so, but that it may still be but one Divine Being? What distinction and unity conserved together we can have otherwise an idea of, without any apprehended inconsistency, absurdity, or contradiction, we shall rashly pronounce to be impossible, (or somewhat imperfectly resembled thereby,) in the Divine Being, unless we understood it better than we do. Some prints and characters of that most perfect Being may be apprehended in the creatures, especially that are intelligent; such being expressly said to have been made in the image of God. And if *here* we find oneness with distinction, meeting together in the same created intelligent being, this may assist our understandings in conceiving what is *possible to be*, in much higher perfection,—though not to the concluding what *certainly is*,—in the uncreated.

V. Waiving the many artificial unions of distinct things, that united, and continuing distinct, make one thing under one name, I shall only consider what is natural; and give instance in what is nearest us,—our very selves: though the truth is, we know so little of our own nature, that it is a strange assuming when we confidently determine what is impossible to be in the Divine nature, besides what he hath told us or made our own faculties plainly tell us is so; and what he hath made any man's faculties to tell him, he hath made all men's that can use them.

But so much we manifestly find in ourselves, that we have three natures in us very sufficiently distinguishable and that are intimately united, the vegetative, sensitive, and the intellective; so that notwithstanding their manifest distinction, no one scruples, when they are united, to call the whole 'the human nature.' Or if any make a difficulty, or would raise a dispute about the distinction of these three natures, I for the present content myself with what is more obvious, not doubting to reach my mark by degrees; namely, that we are made up of a mind and a body, somewhat that can think and somewhat that cannot; sufficiently distinct, yet so united,

that not only every one, without hesitation, calls that thing made up of them, one man; but also every one that considers deeply, will be transported with wonder by what more than magical knot or tie, two things, so little akin, should be so held together, that the one that hath the power of will and choice cannot sever itself, and return into the same union with the other, at pleasure. But,

VI. Since we find this is a thing actually done, the making up of two things of so different natures into one thing,—*that* puts the matter out of doubt that this was a thing possible to be done; it was what God could do, for he hath done it. And if that were possible to him, to unite two things of so very *different* natures into one thing; let any colourable reason be assigned me, why it should not be as possible to him, to unite two things of a *like* nature; that is, if it were possible to him to unite a spirit and a body, why is it less possible to him to have united two spirits? And then I further inquire, if it were possible to him to unite two, would it not be as possible to unite three? Let reason here be put upon its utmost stretch, and tell me what, in all this, is less possible than what we see is actually done? Will any man say two or three spirits united, being of the same nature, will mingle, be confounded, run into one another, and lose their distinction? I ask, supposing them to pre-exist apart, antecedently to their union, are they not now distinguished by their own *individual* essences? Let them be as much united as our souls and bodies are, why should they not as much remain distinct by their singular essences? There is no more hazard of their losing their distinction by the *similitude* of their natures, than of our soul and body transmuting one another by their dissimilitude.

I know not but the dictates of so vogued an author with many in this age, as Spinosa, may signify somewhat with some into whose hands this may fall; who, (with design bad enough,) says, *that*, from whence one might collect the remaining distinction of two things of the *same* nature in such a supposed union, were the more easily conceivable of the two;

that is, than of two things of different natures. For in his Posthumous Ethics, 'De Deo,' he lays this down in explication of his second definition, *Cogitatio aliâ cogitatione terminatur. At corpus non terminatur cogitatione, nec cogitatio corpore.* Some may regard him in this, and it would do our business. For my part, I care not to be so much beholden to him; for it would, at the long run, overdo it; and I know his meaning. But I see not but two congenerous natures are equally capable of being united, retaining their distinction, as two of a different kind; and that sufficiently serves the present purpose.

However, let any man tell me why it should be impossible to God so to unite three spirits, as by his own power to fix their limits also; and by a perpetual law inwrought in their distinct beings, to keep them distinct, so that they shall remain everlastingly united, but not identified; and by virtue of that union, be some one thing,—which must yet want a name,—as much and as truly, as our soul and body united do constitute one man. Nor is it now the question, whether such a union would be convenient or inconvenient, apt or inapt; but all the question is, whether it be possible or impossible; which is as much as we are concerned in at this time. But you will say, 'Suppose it be possible, to what purpose is all this? how remote is it from the supposed trinity in the Godhead!' You will see to what purpose it is by and by. I therefore add,

VII. That if such a union of three things, whether of like or of different natures, so as that they shall be truly one thing, and yet remain distinct though united, can be effected, —as one may with certainty pronounce there is nothing more impossible or unconceivable in it, than we find is actually done,—then it is not intrinsically impossible, or objectively; it is not impossible in itself. No power can effect what is simply and in itself impossible. There is therefore no contradiction, no repugnancy or inconsistency as to the thing, nor consequently any shadow of absurdity in the conception hereof. Whereupon,

VIII. If such a union with such distinction be not impossible in itself, so that by a competent power it is sufficiently possible to be effected or *made;* we are to consider whether it will appear more impossible, or whether I shall have a conception in my own mind anything more incongruous, if I conceive such a union, with such distinction, *unmade,* or that is original and eternal in an unmade or uncreated being. For we are first to consider the thing in itself, abstractly from made or unmade, created or uncreated, being. And if it pass clear of contradiction or absurdity, in its abstract notion, we are so far safe, and are not liable to be charged as having the conception in our minds of an impossible, absurd, or self-repugnant thing: so that clamour and cry of the adversary must cease, or be itself absurd and without pretence. This now supposed union with such distinction, if it be judged impossible as it is in our thoughts introduced into unmade being, can no longer be judged impossible as it is a *union* of distinct things; but only as it is *unmade,* or is supposed to have place in the unmade eternal Being.

IX. This is that then we have further to consider: whether, supposing it possible that three spiritual beings might as well be made or created in a state of so near union with continuing distinction, as to admit of becoming one spiritual being to be called by some fit name,—which might easily be found out, if the thing were produced,—as that a spiritual being and a corporeal being may be made or created in a state of so near union with continuing distinction, as to become one spiritual-corporeal being, called by the name of man; I say, whether, supposing the former of these to be as possible to be done or created as the latter, which we see done already, we may not as well suppose somewhat like it, but infinitely more perfect, to be original and eternal in the uncreated Being? If the first be possible, the next actual, what pretence is there to think the last impossible?

X. I might add, as that which may be expected to be significant with such as do seriously believe the doctrines

both of the incarnation and the trinity, though I know it will signify nothing with them who with equal contempt reject both, that the union of the two natures,—the human, made up of a human body and a human soul, which are two exceedingly different natures, with the Divine, which is a third, and infinitely more different from both the other,—in *one person*, that is, of the Son of God, cannot certainly appear to any considering person more conceivable or possible than that which we now suppose, but assert not, of three distinct essences united in the one Godhead, upon any account, but this only,—that this is supposed to be an unmade, eternal union, the other made and temporal; which renders not the one less conceivable than the other, as it is *union*, but only as in the several terms of this union it is supposed eternally to have place in the being of God; whereas that other union, in respect of one of its terms, is acknowledged *de novo* to have place there.

In short, here is a spiritual created being, a human soul, setting aside for the present the consideration of the human body, which united therewith made up the man, Christ, confessed to be in hypostatical union with the uncreated spiritual being of God; not as that being is in the person of the Father, nor as in the person of the Holy Ghost, for then they should have become man too; but as it was in the person of the Son only. Why shall it be thought less possible that three uncreated spiritual beings may be in so near a union with each other as to be one God, than that a created spirit, and body too, should be in so near union with one of the persons in the Godhead only, as therewith to be one person? Will it not hereby be much more easily apprehensible how one of the Persons (as the common way of speaking is) should be incarnate, and not the other two? Will not the notion of person itself be much more unexceptionable, when it shall be supposed to have its own individual nature? And why is a natural, eternal union of uncreated natures, with continuing distinction or without confusion, (sufficient unto the unity of the Godhead,) less

supposable, than a temporal contracted union with created natures, without confusion too, that shall be sufficient to the unity of a person? Will it be anything more contrary to such simplicity of the Divine nature as is necessarily to be ascribed thereto? or will it be tritheism, and inconsistent with the acknowledged inviolable unity of the Godhead?

XI. That we may proceed to speak to both, let these things be considered with seriousness and sobriety of mind as to ourselves; with all possible reverence towards the blessed God; and with just candour and equanimity towards other men. And first, we must leave it to any one's future representation (not being hitherto able to discern anything) what there is in all this that is here supposed, any way repugnant to such simplicity as God anywhere claims to his own being, or that plain reason will constrain us to ascribe to him, or that is really in itself any perfection. We are sure God hath not by his word taught us to ascribe to him universal absolute simplicity; or suggested to us any such notices as directly and evidently infer it to belong to him; nor hath seemed at all intent upon cautioning of us lest we should *not* ascribe it. The word we find not among his attributes mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. The thing, so far as it signifies any general perfection, we are sure belongs to him; but the Scriptures are not written with visible design to obviate any danger of our misconceiving his nature, by not apprehending it to be in every respect most absolutely simple. It doth teach us to conceive of him as most powerful, most wise, most gracious; and doth not teach us to conceive all these in the abstract, namely, power, wisdom, and goodness, to be the same thing. Yet we easily apprehend, by reflecting upon ourselves, that, without mutiplying the subject, these may all reside together in the same man. But our difficulty is greater to conceive what is commonly taught, that these, without real distinction, or with formal only, as contradistinguished to the difference of thing from thing, are in the abstract affirmable of God: that he is power, wisdom, goodness: that to his being belongs so absolute simplicity,

that we must not look upon these as things really distinguishable there, from one another, but as different conceptions of the same thing. We must conceive of things as we can, not as we cannot; and are only concerned to take heed of unrevealed, and undemonstrable, and peremptory conceptions concerning that glorious, most incomprehensible, and everblessed Being; to beware of too curious prying into the nature of God,—when it was so penal to look unduly into, or even to touch, that only-hallowed symbol of his presence, his ark,—beyond what he hath revealed expressly, or we can most clearly, by generally received light, apprehend. When we know there is a knowledge of him so reserved from us, whereof our minds are so little receptive, that it seemed all one, whether he told us he did dwell in thick darkness or in inaccessible light, it will be a reproach to us, if we shall need to be taught reverence of him by pagans; or that such a document should need to be given us for our admonition, as that very ancient inscription in one of their temples imported, 'I am whatsoever was, is, or shall be, and who is he that shall draw aside my veil?'

XII. If we should suppose three spiritual necessary beings, the one whereof were mere power (or furious might) destitute of either wisdom or goodness; another mere wisdom (or craft rather) destitute of either goodness or power; a third mere goodness (or fond and fruitless kindness) destitute of either power or wisdom, existing separately and apart from each other; this triple conception would overthrow itself, and must certainly allow little ease to any considering mind. Nor could any of these be God. But if we conceive essential power, wisdom, and goodness concurring in one spiritual necessarily existent Being, in which are each of these, not only by the περιχώρησις, usually acknowledged in the three Persons, totally permeating one another, (which signifying but mere presence, as we may express it, is, in comparison, a small thing;) but really and vitally united by so much a nearer and more perfect union than hath ever come under our notice among created beings of partly corporeal, partly

incorporeal natures, by how much beings of purest spirituality may be apter to the most intimate union than when one is quite of a different nature from the other; and as whatsoever union is supposable to be, originally, eternally, and by natural necessity, in the most perfect being, may be thought inexpressibly more perfect than any other: and if, hereupon, we further conceive the most entire, perpetual, everlasting, intercourse and communion of these three, so originally united, that what is conceivable of perfection or excellency in any one of these, is as much the others',—for whatsoever exercises or operations,—as his own; I cannot apprehend what there is of repugnancy, contradiction, or absurdity in this supposition; nor anything that, by any measures he hath given us to govern our conceptions of him, appears unbecoming or unworthy of God. There is, it is true, less simplicity, but more perfection, ascribed hereby to the Divine Being, entirely considered; and more intelligibly, than if you go about to impose upon yourself the notion of most absolute omnimodous simplicity therein. There would be yet more absolute simplicity ascribed unto an eternal Being, if you should conceive in it mere power exclusive of wisdom, and goodness,—and so of the rest; but infinitely less perfection. And, if that would avail anything, I could easily produce more schoolmen than one, of no small note, concurring in this sentiment, that *simplicitas, si sumatur in totâ suâ amplitudine, non dicit perfectionem simpliciter.* But I count it not worth the while.

XIII. And let it be here again observed, I speak not of this as any certain determination, that thus things are in the Deity; but as a possible supposition of what, for aught we know, may be. If any say this gives us the notion of a compounded Deity, or of a composition in it; I only say the term, 'composition,' seems to imply a pre-existing *component* that brings such things together, and supposes such and such more simple things to have pre-existed apart or separate, and to be brought afterwards together into *a united state.* Whereupon I peremptorily deny any composition in

the being of God. And let any man from what hath been hitherto said, or supposed, infer it, if he can. Imagine this of the Godhead, and you shall, we acknowledge, conceive most untruly, most unworthily, most injuriously of God; and what is most absolutely impossible to agree to the Divine Being. And for this reason only, that I know of, that carries any shadow of importance in it, many have been so apt, without the least warrant from any revelation God hath given of himself, to ascribe to him an unintelligible *simplicity;* apprehending they must otherwise admit a *composition* in his most sacred essence, that is, the putting of things together that were separate, to make it up; which must suppose it a new production, that once was not; and from an imperfect state, by the coalition of things once severed, to have arrived to the perfection we ascribe to the Divine Being; which sort of being cannot, without the most absurd and blasphemous contradiction, ever admit to be called God. But if we suppose most perfect, essential power, wisdom, love, by original, eternal, and most natural necessity, to have co-existed in that being, most intimately *united*, though *distinct;* that seemingly important reason will appear but a shadow, and accordingly vanish as such.

And indeed this is no more than what, in effect, such as discourse upon this subject do commonly say (though perhaps some may less consider the ducture and sequel of their own professed sentiments) when they speak of the incomprehensibleness of God's essence, and how impossible it is a finite mind should form or receive a full and complete idea of it; or when they therefore say, that any conceptions we can have of the wisdom, goodness, or any other attribute of the Divine Being, are still but inadequate conceptions; whereby they must mean, when we consider for instance the wisdom of God, that we not only fall infinitely short of conceiving all that belongs to the Divine Being, in that kind; but that there is also infinitely more belonging thereto, in other kinds, than it is possible that conception can contain or express. And when we have the conception in our minds of the Divine wisdom,

do we not apprehend there is really somewhat else in the Divine Being, whereof that term hath no signification? or will we say his wisdom and his power are really the same thing? as they must either be the same or divers things. If we say they are the same, we must, I doubt, confess ourselves to say what we do not understand; especially when, in the abstract, we affirm them of one another and of God, and accordingly say that wisdom is power, and power is wisdom, and the one of these is God, and the other, God. I know a formal distinction is commonly admitted; that is, that the conception of the one is not included in the conception of the other. But are these different conceptions true or false? If false, why are they admitted? If true, there must be somewhat in the nature of the thing corresponding to them. But if we say they are distinct, but most intimately and eternally united in the Divine Being by a necessary natural union, or that it is not impossible so to be, what we say will, I think, agree with itself, and not disagree with any other conception we are obliged to have concerning the blessed God.

In the meantime, I profess not to judge we are, under the precise notions of power, wisdom, and goodness, to conceive of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: nor that the notions we have of those or any other divine perfections do exactly correspond to what, in God, is signified by these names; but I reckon, that what relief and ease is given our minds by their being disentangled from any apprehended necessity of thinking these to be the very *same* things, may facilitate to us our apprehending the Father, Son, and Spirit to be sufficiently distinct for our affirming, or understanding the affirmation, of some things concerning some one, without including the other of them.

XIV. But some perhaps will say, while we thus amplify the distinction of these glorious Three, we shall seem to have too friendly a look towards, or shall say in effect, what Dr. Sherlock is so highly blamed for saying; and make three Gods. I answer, that if with sincere minds we inquire after truth for its own sake, we shall little regard the friendship or

enmity, honour or dishonour, of this or that man. If this were indeed so, doth what was true become false, because such a man hath said it? But it is remote from being so. There is no more here positively asserted than, generally, so much distinction between the Father, Son, and Spirit, as is in itself necessary to the founding the distinct attributions which in the Scriptures are severally given them; that when the word or wisdom was said to be with God (understanding it, as the case requires, with God the Father) in the creation of all things, we may not think, nothing more is said than that he was with himself; that when the Word is said to be made flesh, it is equally said the Father was made flesh, or the Holy Ghost; that when the Holy Ghost is said to have proceeded from, or have been sent, by the Father or the Son, he is said to have proceeded from himself, or have sent himself.—But, in the meantime, this is offered, without determining precisely how great distinction is necessary to this purpose. It is not here positively said these three are three distinct substances, three infinite minds or spirits. We again and again insist and inculcate, how becoming and necessary it is to abstain from over-bold inquiries or positive determinations, concerning the limits or the extent of this distinction, beyond what the Scriptures have, in general, made necessary to the mentioned purpose; that we may not throw ourselves into guilt, nor cast our minds into unnecessary straits, by affirming this or that to be necessary or impossible in these matters.

XV. The case is only thus:—that since we are plainly led by the express revelation God hath made of himself to us in his word, to admit a *trinal conception* of him, or to conceive this threefold distinction in his being, of Father, Son, and Spirit; since we have so much to greaten that distinction, divers things being said of each of these that must not be understood of either of the other; since we have nothing to limit it on the other hand but the *unity* of the Godhead, which we are sure can be but one, both from the plain word of God and the nature of the thing itself; since we are

assured both these may consist, namely, this *trinity* and this *unity*, by being told[1] there are three, and these three (that is, plainly continuing three) are ἕν, one thing; which one thing can mean nothing else but Godhead,—as is also said concerning two of them, elsewhere, (there being no occasion, then, to mention the third,[2]) "I and my Father are one thing:" we are hereupon unavoidably put upon it to cast in our own minds, (and are concerned to do it with the most religious reverence and profoundest humility,) what sort of thing this most sacred Godhead may be, unto which this *oneness* is ascribed, with *threefold distinction*. And manifestly finding there are in the creation *made unions*, with sufficient remaining *distinction*, particularly in ourselves; that we are a soul and a body, things of so very different natures; that often the soul is called the man,—not excluding the body; and the body, or our flesh, called the man,—not excluding the soul; we are plainly led to apprehend, that it is rather more easily possible there might be *two spirits* (so much more agreeing in nature) so united as to be one thing, and yet continuing distinct; and if *two*, there might as well be *three*, if the Creator pleased: and hence are led further to apprehend, that if such a made union, with continuing distinction, be possible in created being, it is, for aught we know, not impossible in the uncreated; that there may be such an eternal *unmade union*, with *continuing distinction*. And all this, being only represented as *possible* to be thus without concluding that *thus* it *certainly is*, sufficiently serves our purpose, that no pretence might remain of excluding the eternal Word and the eternal Spirit, the Godhead, as if a trinity therein were contradictious and impossible, repugnant to reason and common sense. Where now is the coincidency?

XVI. Nor is there, hereupon, so great a remaining difficulty to solve the unity of the Godhead, when the supposition is taken in, of the natural, eternal, necessary union of these three that hath been mentioned.

And it shall be considered, that the Godhead is not sup-

[1] 1 John v. 7. [2] John x. 30.

posed more necessary to exist, than these three are to co-exist in the nearest and most intimate union with each other therein. That Spiritual Being which exists necessarily, and is every way absolutely perfect, whether it consist of three in one, or of only one, is God. We could never have known, it is true, that there are such three co-existing in this one God, if he himself had not told us. "What man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him? Even so the things of God none knoweth, but the Spirit of God."[1] In telling us this he hath told us no impossible, no inconceivable, thing. It is absurd and very irreligious presumption, to say this cannot be. If a worm were so far capable of thought, as to determine this or that concerning our nature; and that such a thing were impossible to belong to it, which we find to be in it, we should trample upon it! More admirable Divine patience spares us! He hath only let us know that this is the state of his essence, whereof we should have been otherwise ignorant. This is its constitution; as if it were said, *ita se habet comparatam; thus it is in and of itself;* that there are *three* in it, to be conceived under the distinct notions of Father, Son, and Spirit, without telling us expressly how far they are distinct, in terms of art or in scholastic forms of speech. But he considered us as men, reasonable creatures; and that when he tells us there are *three* existing in his being, of each of which some things are said that must not be understood spoken of the other, and yet that there is but one God; we are not incapable of understanding, that these *three* must agree *in Godhead;* and yet that they must be *sufficiently distinct* unto this purpose, that we may distinctly conceive of, apply ourselves to, and expect from, the one and the other of them. And the frame of our religion is therefore ordered for us accordingly; that is, for us to whom he hath revealed so much. Others, to whom such notices are not given, he expects should deport themselves towards him according to the light which they have, not which they have not.

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 11.

XVII. But an hypothesis in this affair which leaves out the very *nexus*, that *natural, eternal union*, or leaves it out of its proper place, and insists upon *mutual consciousness*,—which, at the most, is but a consequence thereof,—wants the principal thing requisite to the salving the unity of the Godhead. If two or three created spirits had never so perfect a mutual perspection of one another, that would not constitute them one thing, though it *probably* argue them to be so; and but probably; for God might, no doubt, give them a mutual insight into one another without making them one; but if he should create them in as near a union as our soul and body are in with one another, (and it is very apprehensible they might be created in a much nearer and more permanent one, both being of the same nature, and neither subject to decay,) they would as truly admit to be called *one something*,—as such a creature might well enough be called till a fitter name were found out,—notwithstanding their supposed continuing distinction; as fitly as our soul and body *united*, are, notwithstanding their continuing distinction, called *one man*. And I do sincerely profess such a union, with perpetual distinction, seems to me every whit as conceivable, being supposed unmade, uncreated, and eternal, as any union is among creatures, that must therefore be a made thing or a temporal production.

And whereas necessity of existence, most unquestionably of an intellectual being, is a most certain and fundamental attribute of Deity; the Father, Son, and Spirit being supposed necessarily existent, in this *united state*, they cannot but be God: and the Godhead by reason of this necessary union cannot but be one; yet so, as that when you predicate Godhead, or the name of God, of any one of them, you herein express a true but an inadequate conception of God: that is, the Father is God, not excluding the Son and Holy Ghost; the Son is God, not excluding the Father and the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost is God, not excluding the Father and the Son: as our body is the man, not excluding the soul; our soul is the man, not excluding the body. Therefore their union in Godhead being so strict and close notwithstanding

their distinction, to say that any one of them is God in exclusion of the other two, would not be a true predication. It is indeed said,[1] the Father is the only true God; but that neither excludes the Son nor the Holy Ghost from being the true God also,—each of them communicating in that Godhead which only is true. It had been quite another thing, if it had been said, 'Thou, Father, only, art the true God.'

XVIII. The order moreover is this way also very clearly preserved and fitly complied with, of priority and posteriority, —not of time, as every one sees, but nature,—which the names Father, Son, and Spirit do more than intimate. For the Father, usually called by divines *Fons Trinitatis*, being by this appellation plainly signified to be first in this sacred triad; the Son, as that title imports, to be of the Father; and the Spirit to be of, or from, both the other; let these two latter be considered as being of or from the first,—not by any intervening act of will, by which it might have been possible they should not have been so; but by natural, necessary, eternal *promanation*, so as that necessity of existence is hereby made as truly to agree to them as to the first, which is acknowledged the most fundamental attribute of Deity;—this *promanation* is hereby sufficiently distinguished from creation; and these two set infinitely above all creatures, or the whole universe of created beings. Nor is there hereby any place left for that unapt application of a son and a grandson deriving themselves from the grandfather, or two brothers from one father.[2]

And although it be also true, and readily acknowledged, that there are numerous instances of involuntary productions among the creatures, and which are therefore to be deemed a sort of natural and necessary productions; yet that necessity not being absolute, but *ex hypothesi* only,—that is, upon supposition of their productive causes, and all things requisite to those productions, being so and so aptly posited in order thereto, all which depended upon one sovereign will at first, so that all might have been otherwise,—this signifies nothing

[1] John xvii. 3.

[2] Page 17 of these 'Considerations.'

to exempt them out of the state and rank of creatures, or invalidate this most unalterable distinction between created being and uncreated.

XIX. But if here it shall be urged to me that one individual, necessarily existent, spiritual Being alone is God, and is all that is signified by the name of God; and therefore that three distinct individual, necessarily existent, spiritual Beings must unavoidably be three distinct Gods:

I would say, if by one individual, necessarily existent, spiritual Being, you mean one such Being, comprehending Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, taken together, I grant it. But if by one individual, necessarily existent, spiritual Being, you mean either the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, taken sejunctly, I deny it; for both the other are truly signified by the name of God too, as well as that one.

I therefore say, the term 'individual' must in this case, now supposed as possible, not as certain, admit of a twofold application; either to the distinct essence of the Father, or of the Son, or of the Holy Ghost; or to the entire essence of the Godhead, in which these three do concur. Each of these conceived by itself are (according to this supposition) individual essences; but conceived together, they are the entire individual essence of God. For there is but one such essence, and no more; and it can never be multiplied nor divided into more of the same name and nature: as the body and soul of a man are one individual body and one individual soul, but both together are but one individual man: and the case would be the same, if a man did consist of two, or three spirits, so (or more nearly) united together, as his soul and body are: especially if you should suppose, which is the supposition of no impossible or inconceivable thing, that these three spirits which together, as we now do suppose, do constitute a man, were created with an aptitude to this united co-existence, but with an impossibility of existing separately, except to the Divine power which created them conjunct, and might separate them so as to make them exist apart: which yet cannot be the case in respect of three such uncreated spiritual

Beings, whose union is supposed to be by natural, eternal necessity, as their essences are; and are therefore most absolutely inseparable.

XX. Or if it should be said, I make the notion of God to comprehend Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and a Godhead besides common to these three:

I answer; nothing I have said or supposed implies any such thing; or that the notion of God imports anything more of real being than is contained in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, taken together, and most intimately, naturally, and vitally, by eternal necessity, united with one another: as in a created being, consisting of more things than one taken together and united,—a man for instance,—there is nothing more of real entity, besides what is contained in his body and his soul united and taken together. It is true that this term, a man, speaks somewhat very diverse from a human body taken alone or a human soul taken alone, or from both, separately taken; but nothing diverse from both united, and taken together. And for what this may be unjustly collected to imply of composition, repugnant to Divine perfection, it is before obviated: Sect. XIII.

If therefore it be asked, 'What do we conceive under the notion of God, but a necessary, spiritual Being?' I answer, that this is a true notion of God, and may be passable enough, among pagans, for a full one. But we Christians are taught to conceive, under the notion of God, a necessary, spiritual Being, in which Father, Son, and Spirit do so necessarily co-exist as to constitute that Being; and that when we conceive any one of them to be God, that is but an inadequate, not an entire and full, conception of the Godhead. Nor will any place remain for that trivial cavil, that if each of these have Godhead in him, he therefore hath a trinity in him; but that he is one of the three who together are the one God, by necessary, natural, eternal union.

Which union is also quite of another kind than that of three men (as for instance, of Peter, James, and John) partaking in the same kind of nature; who, notwithstanding,

exist separately and apart from each other. *These* three are supposed to co-exist in natural, necessary, eternal, and most intimate union, so as to be one Divine Being.

Nor is it any prejudice against our thus stating the notion of the Godhead, that we know of no such union in all the creation, that may assist our conception of this union. What incongruity is there in supposing, in this respect as well as in many others, somewhat most peculiarly appropriate to the being of God? If there be no such actual union in the creation, it is enough to our purpose if such a one were possible to have been. And we do know of the actual union of two things of very different natures so as to be one thing, and have no reason to think the union of two or more things of the same sort of nature, with sufficient remaining distinction, less possible or less intelligible.

XXI. Upon the whole, let such a union be conceived in the being of God, with such distinction, and one would think (though the complexions of men's minds do strangely and unaccountably differ) the absolute perfection of the Deity, and especially the perfect felicity thereof, should be much the more apprehensible with us. When we consider that most delicious society which would hence ensue among the so entirely consentient Father, Son, and Spirit, with whom there is so perfect rectitude, everlasting harmony, mutual complacency, unto highest delectation; according to our way of conceiving things, who are taught by our own nature—which also hath in it the Divine image—to reckon no enjoyment pleasant without the consociation of some other with us therein, we for our parts cannot but hereby have in our minds a more gustful idea of a blessed state, than we can conceive in mere eternal solitude.

God speaks to us as men, and will not blame us for conceiving things, so infinitely above us, according to the capacity of our natures; provided we do not assume to ourselves to be a measure for our conceptions of him, further than as he is himself pleased to warrant and direct us herein. Some likeness we may, taught by himself, apprehend between

him and us, but with infinite, not inequality only, but unlikeness. And for this case of delectation in society, we must suppose an immense difference between him,—an all-sufficient, self-sufficient Being, comprehending in himself the infinite fulness of whatsoever is most excellent and delectable,—and ourselves; who have in us but a very minute portion of being, goodness, or felicity, and whom he hath made to stand much in need of one another, and most of all of him.

But when, looking into ourselves, we find there is in us a disposition, often upon no necessity, but sometimes from some sort of benignity of temper, unto conversation with others; we have no reason, when other things concur and do fairly induce and lead our thoughts this way, to apprehend any incongruity in supposing he may have some distinct object of the same sort of propension in his own most perfect Being too, and therewith such a propension itself also.

XXII. As to what concerns ourselves, the observation is not altogether inapposite, what Cicero, treating of Friendship, discourses of perpetual solitude: 'That the affectation of it must signify the worst of ill-humour, and the most savage nature in the world. And supposing one of so sour and morose a humour, as to shun and hate the conversation of men, he would not endure it, to be without some one or other to whom he might disgorge the virulency of that his malignant humour: or supposing such a thing could happen, that God should take a man quite out of the society of men, and place him in absolute solitude, supplied with the abundance of whatsoever nature could covet besides,—who,' saith he, 'is so made of iron, as to endure that kind of life?' And he introduces Archytas Tarentinus reported to speak to this purpose,—'That if one could ascend into heaven, behold the frame of the world, and the beauty of every star, his admiration would be unpleasant to him alone; which would be most delicious, if he had some one to whom to express his sense of the whole.'

We are not, I say, strictly to measure God by ourselves in this, further than as he himself prompts and leads us. But

if we so form our conception of Divine bliss as not to exclude from it somewhat, whereof that delight in society which we find in ourselves may be an imperfect faint resemblance; it seems not altogether disagreeable to what the Scriptures also teach us to conceive concerning him, when they bring in the eternal Wisdom, saying, as one distinct from the prime Author and Parent of all things: "Then was I by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight."[1]

XXIII. However, let the whole of what hath been hitherto proposed be taken together; and to me, it appears our conception of the *sacred trinunity* will be so remote from any shadow of inconsistency or repugnancy, that no necessity can remain upon us of torturing wit and racking invention to the uttermost, to do a laboured and artificial violence (by I know not what screws and engines) to so numerous plain texts of Scripture, only to undeify our glorious Redeemer and do the utmost "despite to the Spirit of grace." We may be content to let the word of God, or what we pretend to own for a Divine revelation, stand as it is, and undistorted speak its own sense. And when we find the Former of all things speaking as *we*[2] or *us;* when we find another *I*, possessed by the Lord, in the beginning of his way, before his works of old, so as that he says of himself, as distinct from the other, "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was,"[3]—and, "When he prepared the heavens, I was there,"[4] etc.; when we find the child born for us, the son given to us, called also "the mighty God," and (as in reference to us he fitly might) "the everlasting Father;"[5] when we are told of the Ruler that was to come out of Bethlehem-Ephrata, that "his goings forth were from everlasting:"[6] that, "The word was in the beginning with God, and was God—that all things were made by him, and without him nothing was made that was made—that this word was made flesh—that his glory was beheld as the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth;"[7] even that same *he* that

[1] Prov. viii. 30. [2] Gen. i. 26. [3] Prov. viii. 23. [4] Prov. viii. 27. [5] Isa. ix. 6. [6] Micah v. 2. [7] John i. 1.

above was said to have been "in the beginning with God, and to be God:"—that when he who was said to have "come down from heaven," was, even while he was on earth, at that time said to be "in heaven:"[1]—that we are told by himself, he and his Father are one thing:[2]—that he is not only said to know the heart, but to know all things:[3]—that even he who according to the flesh came of the Israelites, is yet expressly said to be "over all, God blessed for ever:"[4]—that when he was "in the form of God, he humbled himself" to the taking on him "the form of a servant," and to be found "in fashion as a man:"[5]—that it is said, "all things were created by him, that are in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers,—and that all things were created by him, and for him;"[6] than which nothing could have been said more peculiar or appropriate to Deity:—that even of the Son of God it is said, he is the "true God and eternal life:"[7]—that we are so plainly told, he is "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last," he that "was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty"[8] "the beginning of the creation of God:"[9] the searcher of hearts:[10]—that the Spirit of God is said to "search all things, even the deep things of God:"[11]—that lying to him is said to be lying to God:[12]—that the great Christian solemnity, baptism, is directed to be in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost:—that it is so distinctly said, "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and that these three are one thing:"[13]—I cannot imagine what should oblige us so studiously to wire-draw all this to quite other meanings.

XXIV. And for the leaving out of the last-mentioned text in some copies, what hath been said (not to mention divers others) by the famously learned Dr. Hammond upon that place, is so reasonable, so moderate, so charitable to the opposite party, and so apt to satisfy impartial and unprejudiced minds,

[1] John iii. 13. [2] John x. 30. [3] John xxi. 17. [4] Rom. ix. 5.
[5] Phil. ii. 7, 8. [6] Col. i. 16. [7] 1 John v. 20. [8] Rev. i. 8.
[9] Rev. iii. 14. [10] Chap. ii. 23. [11] 1 Cor. ii. 10. [12] Acts v. 3.
[13] 1 John v. 7.

that one would scarce think, after the reading of it, any real doubt can remain concerning the authenticness of that 7th verse in 1 John v.

Wherefore now taking all these texts together, with many more that might have been mentioned, I must indeed profess to wonder, that with men of so good sense as our Socinian adversaries are accounted, this consideration should not have more place and weight; namely, that it being so obvious to any reader of the Scriptures to apprehend from so numerous texts, that Deity must belong to the Son of God, and that there wants not sufficient inducement to conceive so of the Holy Ghost also; there should be no more caution given in the Scriptures themselves to prevent mistake (if there were any) in apprehending the matter accordingly: and to obviate the unspeakable consequent danger of erring in a case of so vast importance. How unagreeable it is to all our notions of God, and to his usual procedure in cases of less consequence! How little doth it consist with his being so wise and compassionate a lover of the souls of men, to let them be so fatally exposed unto so inevitable and so destructive a delusion; that the whole Christian church should, through so many centuries of years, be even trained into so horrid and continued idolatry by himself who so severely forbids it! I cannot allow myself to think men of that persuasion insincere in their professing to believe the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, when the leader and head of their party wrote a book, that is not without nerves, in defence of it. But I confess I cannot devise with what design they can think those Scriptures were written; or why they should count it a thing worthy of Infinite Wisdom to vouchsafe such a revelation to men, allowing them to treat and use it as *they* do! and that till some great Socinian wits should arise fifteen hundred years after, to rectify their notions in these things, men should generally be in so great hazard of being deceived into damnation by those very Scriptures, which were professedly writ to make them wise to salvation!

XXV. Nor is it of so weighty importance in this con-

troversy, to cast the balance the other way, that a noted critic (upon what introducement needs not be determined) changed his judgment; or that his posthumous interpretations of some texts, if they were his interpretations, carry an *appearance* of his having changed it, because he thought such texts might possibly admit to be interpreted otherwise than they usually were by such as alleged them for the *trinity*, or the disputed Deity of the Son or Spirit; or that the cause must be lost, upon his deserting it, or that he was still to be reckoned of the opposite party, as this author calls it; and that such texts as we most relied upon, were therefore given up by some of our own.

And it is really a great assuming, when a man shall adventure to pronounce so peremptorily against the so common judgment of the Christian church, without any colour of proof, that our copies are false copies, our translations, our explications false, and the generality of the wisest, the most inquisitive, most pious, and most judicious asserters of the Christian cause for so many continued ages, fools or cheats for owning and avowing them,—for no other imaginable reason, but only because they make against him! How will he prove any copies we rely upon to be false? Is it because he is pleased to suspect them? And is an interpretation false, because the words can possibly be tortured unto some other sense? Let him name me the text, wherein any doctrine is supposed to be delivered that is of merely supernatural revelation, of which it is not possible to devise some other meaning; nor more remote, alien, or unimaginable, than theirs, of most of the disputed texts.

Nor indeed do we need to except that natural sentiment in itself, that there is but one God:—which our author takes such pains to prove, as if he thought or would make other men think, we denied it. For though it is so generally acknowledged, doth he not know it is not so generally understood in the same sense? Against whom doth he write? Doth he not know they understand this *oneness* in one sense, he in another? they in such a sense as admits a trinity, he in a sense that excludes it?

But, for such things as did need a superadded verbal revelation, how easy is it to an inventive, pervicacious wit, to wrest words this way or that.

XXVI. The Scriptures were writ for the instruction of sober learners; not for the pastime of contentious wits, that affect only to play tricks upon them. At their rate of interpreting, among whom he ranks himself, it is impossible any doctrine can with certainty be founded upon them.

Take the first chapter of St. John's Gospel for instance, and what doctrine can be asserted in plainer words, than the Deity of Christ, in the three first verses of that chapter? Set any man of an ordinary, unprepossessed understanding, to read them; and when he finds that by the Word is meant Jesus Christ, (which themselves admit,) see if he will not judge it plainly taught that Jesus Christ is God, in the most eminent, known sense; especially when he shall take notice of so many other texts that, according to their most obvious appearance, carry the same sense. But it is first, —through mere shortness of discourse,—taken for granted and rashly concluded on, that it is absolutely impossible, if the Father be God, the Son can be God too, (or the Holy Ghost,) upon a presumption, that we can know everything that belongs to the Divine nature; and what is possible to be in it, and what not; and next, there is hereupon not only a license imagined, but an obligation and necessity, to shake heaven and earth, or tear that Divine word, that is more stable, into a thousand pieces, or expound it to nothing,—to make it comply with that forelaid presumptuous determination! Whereas if we could but bend our minds so far to comply with the plain ducture of that revelation God hath made unto us of himself, as to apprehend that in the most only Godhead there may be distinctions which we particularly understand not, sufficient to found the doctrine of a trinity therein, and very consistent with the *unity* of it; we should save the Divine word and our own minds from unjust torture, both at once. And our task herein will be the easier, that we are neither concerned nor allowed to determine that

things are precisely so or so; but only to suppose it possible that so they may be, for aught that we know: which will I am certain not be so hard nor so bold an undertaking, as his, who shall take upon him to prove, that anything here supposed is impossible.

Indeed if any one would run the discourse into the abyss of infinity, he may soon create such difficulties to himself, as it ought not to be thought strange if they be greater than any human understanding can expedite: but not greater than any man will be entangled in, that shall set himself to consider infinity upon *other* accounts; which yet he will find it imposed upon him unavoidably to admit, whether he will or no: not greater than this author will be equally concerned in, upon his doing that right to truth, in opposition to the former leaders of his own party, as to acknowledge the omnipresence of the Divine essence;[1]—which he will find, let him try it when he will: nor yet so great, nor accompanied with so gross, so palpable and horrid absurdities, as he will soon be encountered with, should he retract his grant, or entertain the monstrously maimed, and most deformed, impious conceit, of a finite or limited Deity.

XXVII. Yet also in this present case, the impossibility to our narrow minds of comprehending infinity, is most rationally improvable to our very just advantage. It ought to be upbraided to none as a pretext or a cover to sloth or dulness. It is no reproach to us that we are creatures, and have not infinite capacities. And it ought to quiet our minds, that they may so certainly know they have limits; within which we are to content ourselves with such notions, about indemonstrable and unrevealed things, as they can, with great ease to themselves, find room for.

I can reflect upon nothing in what is here proposed, but what is intelligible without much toil or much metaphysics. As matters of so common concernment ought, to our uttermost, to be represented in such a way that they may be so, we need not be concerned in scholastic disquisitions about

[1] Page 32.

union, or by what peculiar name to call that which is here supposed. It is enough for us to know there may be a real, natural, vital, and very intimate union, of things that shall, notwithstanding it, continue distinct, and that shall, by it, be truly one. Nor do we need to be anxiously curious in stating the notions of *person* or *personality*, of *suppositum* and *suppositality*, though I think not the term 'person' disallowable in the present case. Nor will I say what that noted man (so noted that I need not name him, and who was as much acquainted with metaphysics as most in his age) published to the world above twenty years ago,—that he counted the notion of the schools about *suppositum* a foolery. For I do well know the thing itself, which our Christian metaphysicians intended, to be of no small importance in our religion, and especially to the doctrine of redemption and of our Redeemer.

XXVIII. But I reckon they that go the more metaphysical way, and content themselves with the modal distinction of three persons in the Godhead, say nothing herein that can be proved absurd or contradictious. As to what is commonly urged, that if there be three persons in the Deity, each person must have its distinct *individual essence*, as well as its distinct *personality*, I would deny the consequence, and say, that though this be true in *created* persons (taking person in the strict metaphysical sense) it is not necessary to be so in *uncreated;* that the reason is not the same between finite things and infinite: and would put them to prove, if they can, that the same infinite essence cannot be whole and undivided in three several persons; knowing there can be nothing more difficult urged in the case, than may against the Divine omnipresence, which irrefragable reasons, as well as the plainest testimony of Scripture, will oblige us to acknowledge.

But I think, though this hypothesis, abstractly considered and by itself, is not indefensible, it doth not altogether so well square with the Christian economy, nor so easily allow that distinction to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which seems requisite to found the distinct attributions that are severally given them in the Holy Scriptures.

XXIX. To conclude, I only wish these things might be considered and discoursed with less confidence and peremptory determination; with a greater awe of what is divine and sacred; and that we may more confine ourselves to the plain words of Scripture in this matter, and be content therewith. I generally blame it in the Socinians, who appear otherwise rational and considering men, that they seem to have formed their belief of things not possible to be known but by the Scriptures, without them; and then think they are, by all imaginable arts and they care not what violence, (as Socinus himself hath in effect confessed,) to mould and form them according to their preconceived sense. Common modesty and civility, one would have thought, should have made Schlictingius abstain from prefixing and continuing that as a running title to a long chapter: *Articulus Evangelicorum de Trinitate cum sensu communi pugnat;* engrossing common sense to himself and his party, and reproaching the generality of Christians, as not understanding common sense! They should take upon them less, and not vaunt, as if they were "the men, and wisdom must die with them."

For this author, I congratulate his nearer approach to us from those who were formerly leaders of his party, in the doctrines of God's omnipresence, and the perceptiveness and activity of separate souls. He writes with sprightliness and vigour, and, I doubt not, believes really, what he writes with so little seeming doubt. And because his spirit appears to be of a more generous, exalted pitch, than to comport with anything against his judgment, for secular interest and advantage, I reckon it the greater pity it should want the addition of what would be very ornamental to it, and which he wishes to two of the persons to whom he makes himself an antagonist,—more of the tenderness and catholic charity of genuine Christianity,[1] to accompany those his abilities and learning, which would not thereby be the lesser—as he speaks—nor the less conspicuous.

I believe few would have thought him to see the less

[1] Page 19, col. 2.

clearly, if he had been content to see for himself, not for mankind: and if he had not talked at that rate as if he carried the eyes of all the world in his pocket, they would have been less apt to think he carried his own there. Nor had his performance, in this writing of his, lost anything of real value, if in a discourse upon so grave a subject, some *lepidities* had been left out, as that of *Dulcinea del Toboso*, etc.

And to allude to what he says of Dr. Cudworth ;—his displeasure will not hurt so rough an author as Arnobius, so many ages after he is dead, if he should happen to offend him, by having once said, *Dissoluti—est pectoris in rebus seriis quærere voluptatem*, etc.

But for all of us, I hope we may say without offence to any, common human frailty should be more considered, and that we know but in part, and in how small a part! We should, hereupon, be more equal to one another: and,—when it is obvious to every one how we are straitened in this matter, and that we ought to suppose one another intently aiming to reconcile the Scripture discovery with natural sentiments,—should not uncharitably censure, or labour to expose one another, that any seem more satisfied with their own method than with ours. What an odd and almost ludicrous spectacle do we give to the blessed angels that supervise us,—if their benignity did not more prompt them to compassion,—when they behold us fighting in the dark, about things we so little understand; or, when we all labour under a gradual blindness, objecting it to one another and one accusing another, that he abandons not his own too weak sight, to see only by his perhaps blinder eye.

Thus, Sir, you have my sense what I think safe and enough to be said in this weighty matter. To you, these thoughts are not new, with whom they have been communicated and discoursed heretofore, long ago. And I believe you may so far recollect yourself, as to remember the principal ground was suggested to you upon which this discourse now rests,—namely, necessity of existence and contingency; emanations absolutely independent upon any will at all, and the arbitrary

productions of the Divine will,—as the sufficient and most fundamental difference between what is uncreated and what is created; and upon this very account, as that which might give scope and room to our thoughts, to conceive the doctrine of the *trinity* consistently with the *unity* of the Godhead; and so, as that the Son, though truly from the Father, and the Holy Ghost, though truly from both, shall yet appear infinitely distinguished from all created beings whatsoever.

So much you know was under consideration with us above twenty years ago, and was afterwards imparted to many more; long before there was any mention or forethought, within our notice, of such a revival of former controversies, upon this subject, as we have lately seen.

This occasion, now given, hath put me upon revolving anew these former thoughts, and upon digesting them into some order, such as it is, for public view. If they shall prove to be of any use, it appears they will not be out of season; and it will be grateful to me to be any way serviceable to so worthy a cause. If they should be found altogether useless, being evicted either of impertinency or untruth, it shall not be ungrateful; for I thank God I find not a disposition in my mind to be fond of any notions of mine, as they are such; nor to be more adventurous or confident in determining of things hid, not only in so profound, but in most sacred darkness, than I have all along expressed myself. I ought indeed to be the more cautious of offending in this kind, that being the thing I blame;—the positive asserting this or that to be impossible, or not possibly competent, to the nature of God, which by his own word or the manifest reason of things doth not plainly appear to be so: much more which his word doth, as plainly as it is possible anything can be expressed by words, ascribe to him. The only thing I assert is, that a trinity in the Godhead may be possible, for aught we know, in the way that I have proposed: at least it is so, for anything that I do as yet know. And so confident I am of the truth, and true meaning of his word, revealing a trinity in his eternal Godhead, that I strongly hope, if ever it shall be

proved to be impossible upon these terms that I have here set down, by the same or by equal light the possibility of it some other way will appear too; that is, that not only a *trinity* in the *unity* of the Godhead is a possible thing, but that it is also possible that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost may be sufficiently distinguished to answer the frame and design of Christianity: and that will equally serve my purpose. For so, however, will the scandal be removed, that may seem to lie upon our holy religion, through the industrious misrepresentation which is made of it by sceptics, deists, or atheists, as if it were made up of inconsistencies and absurdities, and were fitter to be entertained with laughter than faith: and being effectually vindicated, it will be the more successfully propagated, and more cheerfully practised; which is all that is coveted and sought by,

Sir,

Your very respectful,
humble servant, etc.

POSTSCRIPT.

Having the copies of some letters by me, which I wrote to Dr. Wallis between two and three years ago upon this subject; I think, Sir, it is not improper, and perhaps it may be some way useful, to let them accompany this to yourself. And here I shall freely tell you my principal inducement (taking notice, in some of the Doctor's printed letters, of others *to* him, contained in them) to send him *incognito* one also; but with that reason against printing it, which you find towards the end of the first letter.

It was really the apprehension, which had long remained with me, that the *simplicity*, which—if the notion of it were stretched too far—not the Scriptures, but the schools, have taught us to ascribe to the being of God, was that alone

which hath given us difficulty in conceiving a trinity in the only one God.

It is not the *unity* or *oneliness* of the Godhead, but the *simplicity* of it, as the school-men have stated it, that hath created the matter of dispute. Unity, you know, denies more of the same; simplicity denies more in it. Concerning the former, that there could be no more gods than one, we are at a point; the reason of the thing itself, and the Holy Scriptures so expressly asserting it, leave it out of dispute.

All the doubt is about the latter: not whether such a thing belong to the nature of God; but concerning the just explication of it. As it is a real excellency, not a blemish; and not merely a moral, but a natural excellency, there can be no doubt of its belonging to the Divine nature; but if you understand it as exclusive of all variety therein, you find not any express mention of such an attribute of God in the Scriptures. They are silent in the matter. It hath no authority, but of the schools. That and the reason that can be brought for it must give it its whole and only support. It is the only thing that must open, and give way, to admit the doctrine of the trinity; and it is the only thing that needs to do so. For we none of us assert a trinity of Gods; but a trinity in the Godhead. It is the only thing that can to the adversaries of the trinity, with any colourable pretence, seem opposite to it: and which therefore I thought the only thing that remained to be sifted and examined, if they will state it in an opposition thereto; *to consider* what so mighty and invincible strength of reason it had, whence alone either to shock the authority or pervert the plain meaning of the Holy Scriptures, discompose the whole frame of Christian religion, disturb the peace of the church, perplex very thinking minds, subvert the faith of some, and turn it into ridicule with too many.

I reckoned the Doctor (as I still do, notwithstanding the contempt this author hath of him) a person of a very clear, unmuddied understanding. I found him, by what he ex-

pressed in his first letter of the trinity, not apt to be awed by the authority of the schools, nor any bigot to them; as having declined their notion of a 'person,' and fixing upon another,—less answering, as I apprehend, the scheme and design of Christianity,—I thought it easy, and reputable enough to him, to add what might be requisite in this matter, without contradicting, directly or discernibly, anything he had said. I gave him the opportunity of doing it, as from himself, without seeming to have the least thing to that purpose suggested to him by any other. I had myself, I think, seen and considered the main strength of the schoolmen's reasonings concerning that *simplicity* which they will have to be divine; and, for aught I do yet know, have competently occurred to it in this foregoing letter, and partly in what you will now find I wrote to him. But what there is of real infirmity or impertinency to this case (as it is, and ought to be represented) in their arguings, I reckoned he would both see and evince more clearly than I.

Therefore I greatly desired to have engaged him upon this point; but I could not prevail; and am therefore willing that what I writ then with design of the greatest privacy, should now become public. Not that I think it hath so great value in itself; but that perhaps it may further serve to excite some others, more able and more at leisure, to search and inquire into this matter; and either to improve or disprove what I have essayed. And which of the two it is, it is all one to me; for I have no interest or design but that of truth, and the service of the Christian cause.

I was so little apprehensive of any such future use to be made of these letters, that I kept no account of the dates, except that one of the two latter (which both only refer to the first) I find, by the copy I have in my hands, to have been sent December 19th, 1691. I remember it was a long time, and guess it might be six or eight weeks, ere I heard anything of the first, after I had sent it. Probably it might have been sent in October, or the beginning of November, before. I at length heard of it very casually, being in a

house in London, whither the Doctor's eighth letter was newly arrived (then no secret) in order to impression. I then found this my first letter was lightly touched, but mistaken; which occasioned (it being a post night) my second. That was followed by the third, the next post after, when I had a little more time wherein to express my mind, though I still concealed my name, as it is yet fittest to do,—my main business in my letter to you lying with a person, who, blamelessly enough, conceals his.

These two latter of my letters to the Doctor produced some alteration in that paragraph of his eighth letter which relates to my first; but yet no way answering the design for which I writ it. You have them now together exactly according to the copies I have by me, excepting one or two circumstantial things fitly enough left out, or somewhat altered. And they had all slept long enough, if this occasion had not brought them to light.

But before I give them to you, let me suggest some things further to you concerning the foregoing letter to yourself. You may apprehend that some will think it strange, if not an inconsistency, that I should suppose it possible an absolute omnimodous simplicity may not belong to the Divine Being, when yet I absolutely deny all composition in it.

And I apprehend too some may think so, at least awhile; but such as have considered well, will not think so, and such as shall, I presume will not long. For,

1. If I had denied the simplicity of the Divine nature, had the inference been just, that therefore I must grant a composition? How many instances might be given of one opposite not agreeing to this or that thing, when also the other doth as little agree! And most of all doth the transcendent excellency of the Divine nature exempt it from the limiting by-partitions to which creatures are subject.

Take reason in the proper sense, for arriving gradually by argumentation from the knowledge of more evident to the knowledge of obscurer things, and so we cannot say the Divine nature is rational. But is it therefore to be called

irrational? Faith and hope agree not to it. Are we therefore to think infidelity or despair do not disagree?

It is indeed more generally apprehended we can scarce have the notion of anything that strictly, or otherwise than by some very defective analogy, agrees to him, and to us;—some pagans, and some Christians from them, not in derogation, but in great reverence to the high excellency of the Deity, not excepting the most common notion of all other, even that of *being* itself; making his being and substance to be superessential and supersubstantial. It is out of doubt that whatsoever perfection is in us, is not the same thing in him formally, but in an unconceivable transcendent eminency only. Do therefore their contraries agree to him?

2. I am far from denying the simplicity of the blessed nature of God, which I ascribe to him in the highest perfection which it is capable of signifying. I most peremptorily affirm not only all the simplicity which he expressly affirms of himself, but all that can by just consequence be inferred from any affirmation of his; or that can by plain reason be evinced any other way. 'Whatsoever is any real perfection,' etc. Sect. XI.

It is true, while I affirm such a simplicity as excludes all composition, in the sense already given, I affirm not such as excludes all variety: not such as excludes a trinity, which he so plainly affirms, and with such distinction as his affirmations concerning it imply, and make requisite.

I further judge, that though the Scriptures do not expressly ascribe simplicity to the being of God, as a natural excellency, they say that which implies it, as such, to belong to him; as when they bring him in saying of himself, "I am what I am." This must imply his nature to exclude everything that is alien from itself. I take it, as it signifies, besides a moral, a mere natural excellency;—to import a most perfect purity of essence. And I understand that to be *purum*, which is *plenum sui*, and *quod nihil habet alieni*. I do therefore take the natural simplicity of the Divine Being to exclude the ingrediency of anything that can infer in it

conflict, decay, change, disturbance, or infelicity in the least degree; and to include whatsoever infers the contraries of all these; serenity, tranquillity, harmony, stability, delight, and joy, in highest perfection; as necessity of existence also doth: and that for all this, it by no means needs to exclude a trinity, but to include it rather.

But I judge human, and even all created, minds very incompetent judges of the Divine simplicity. We know not what the Divine nature may include consistently with its own perfection, nor what it must, as necessary thereto. Our eye is no judge of corporeal simplicity. In darkness it discerns nothing but simplicity, without distinction of things: in more dusky light the whole horizon appears most simple, and everywhere like itself: in brighter light, we perceive great varieties, and much greater if a microscope assist our eye. But of all the aërial people that replenish the region (except rare appearances to very few) we see none. Here want not objects, but a finer eye.

It is much at this rate with our minds in beholding the spiritual sphere of beings, most of all the uncreated, which is remotest, and furthest above, out of our sight. We behold simplicity; and what do we make of that? vast undistinguished vacuity; sad, immense solitude: only this at first view! If we draw nearer, and fix our eye, we think we apprehend somewhat, but dubiously hallucinate; as the half-cured blind man did, when he thought he saw men like trees.

But if a voice which we acknowledge Divine, speak to us out of the profound abyss, and tell us of grateful varieties and distinctions in it; Good God! shall we not believe it? Or shall we say we clearly see *that* is not, which only *we* do not see? This seems like somewhat worse than blindness!

LETTERS TO DR. WALLIS, SENT IN 1691.

LETTER I.

Sir,—I could much please myself in revolving in my own mind the very respectful thoughts and veneration I have long had for you, and in conversing with the grateful and entertaining idea which I have,—not arbitrarily, but by your irresistible imposition,—received and retained of you many years on the account of your former most useful and acceptable performances; and which is both renewed and heightened greatly by your late clear, prudent, and piously modest discourses, (both letters and sermons,) of that awful mystery, the trinity in the Godhead. But as I can neither satisfy myself of the fitness of making an encomium of you the matter of a letter to yourself; so nor can I hope to please you by doing a thing in itself so inept, and so insignificant to you. I shall better do both, if I shall offer anything to you concerning this mentioned subject, your further consideration whereof may prove a further benefit to the world.

In what you have already said concerning it, you have used that great caution, and so well guarded yourself, as not, so far as I can apprehend, to give an adversary, in this single point, the least advantage. That which I would in the general humbly offer, is, whether you have said so much as with safety might be said, and as the case may require, for the gaining of a just advantage to the common Christian cause.

We design, in fight, not only to keep ourselves safe, bu

to overcome; and not *in prælio* only, but in *bello*. In wars indeed of this sort, both our own safety and victory are less to be valued than truth: which, being of a piece, can be injured in no part, without some damage to the whole frame of congenerous truth. And as it is very possible, while an enemy is withstood attacking some one fort, a greater loss may not be provided against elsewhere; it may so fall out in affairs of this kind too, that the care of defending some one truth may be accompanied with a present not-attending to the jeopardy of divers others. The nearer we approach an adversary within just limits, in these rational decertations, the less he can have to say against us. But being well resolved ourselves about the main point of disagreement, we then take care not to come so near as to fall in with him, pass into his tents, and give away our main cause.

I am, worthiest Sir, far from assuming so much to myself, or detracting so much from you, as to give a judgment that this really is done in your discourses about the trinity. I only submit to your own most penetrating judgment what may be further requisite and possible in this matter, to take away any appearances hereof, and prevent ill consequences that may too easily ensue. I have, for my own part, long imposed it upon myself to abstain from any positive conceptions concerning the Godhead, beyond what I find expressly contained in the Divine revelation, or what the reason of things, either antecedently thereto or consequentially thereupon, doth most evidently persuade and require; and do greatly approve the same caution, which I cannot but observe with you: but desire it may be weighed whether such measures may not and must not lead us further.

As for the word *person*, you prudently profess not to be fond of it, the thing being agreed; though you also truly judge it a good word, and sufficiently warranted. For the *notion* signified by it, you all along seem to decline that of the schools, or the metaphysical one, which, you know, makes it to be a rational or intelligent *suppositum;* and to take up with what I think I may,—wanting a fitter, that is,

a more comprehensive word,—call the *civil notion* of it; which will allow the same man to be capable of sustaining three or more persons, supposing his circumstances or qualifications to be such or such; as to that purpose you speak both in your letters and sermons.

Now whereas you have also told us, Letter I., that by *personality* you mean that distinction, whatever it be, by which the three persons are distinguished each from other; that which, with great submission, and most profound respect to you, I propose to your further consideration, will be capable of being resolved into these two inquiries.

I. Whether only such a distinction of the Divine persons as this amounts to, will be sufficient to found the several attributions which the Holy Scriptures give distinctly and severally to them, and to preserve the scheme of Christian religion entire, which is wont to be deduced from these sacred writings.

II. Whether some further distinction may not be admitted as possible, consistently with the salved unity of the Godhead.

As to the former—1. Whereas you think the word 'person' to be a good word, and sufficiently warranted by Scripture,[1] —where the Son is called the express image of his Father's person,—alleging that so we render the word *hypostasis* which is there used, and do mean by it what you think to be there meant; I desire you would please to consider whether the word *hypostasis*, according to the common use of it, will admit to be so taken, as you explain yourself to mean by the word 'person.' For though the Latin word *persona*, as you say, according to the true and ancient sense, may well enough admit to be so taken as that the *same man* might sustain *three persons*, I offer it to your reconsideration, whether ever you have observed the word *hypostasis* in any sort of authors, when it signifies any person at all, (for I know that it frequently signifies somewhat else than a person,) to be taken in that sense: and whether one *hypostasis*, so taken as it uses to be when it signifies a person, may not be capable of sustaining three of those persons which you here describe: and whether,

[1] Heb. i. 3.

according to this sense, you mean not God to be only *one* such *hypostasis*.

2. Be pleased further hereupon to consider how well it agrees with this supposition of God's being but one *hypostasis* or intelligent *suppositum*, so frequently to speak, as the Holy Scriptures do, of the Father, Son or Word, the Spirit or Holy Ghost, as three distinct I's or He's: "The Lord possessed me"—as the Divine Word or Wisdom is brought in speaking—"in the beginning of his way—I was set up from everlasting."[1] "When he prepared the heavens I was there."[2] —"Then was I by him, etc."[3] "The Word was with God."[4] "He was in the world."[5] "We beheld his glory."[6] And of the Spirit: "He dwelleth with you."[7] "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things."[8] And whom I will send you from the Father, "he shall testify of me."[9] "And when he is come, he will reprove the world . . ."[10] And the observation seems to me as weighty, as it is usual, that, in some of the mentioned chapters, the somewhat hard *synthesis* of construing ἐκεῖνος with πνεῦμα, (even where παράκλητος is not the nearer '*suppositum*,' but, in one place, a very remote one, and one would think too remote to be referred to,[11]) is rather chosen to be used than that the Spirit should not be spoken of as a distinct *he*, or rather than he should be called *it*, which could not so fitly notify a person. If the same man were a king, a general, and a father, I doubt whether that would give sufficient ground to his being called *he*, and *he*, and *he*.

3. But the distinct predicates spoken of the three sacred persons in the Godhead seem much more to challenge a greater distinction of the persons than your notion of a *person* doth seem to admit: that of *sending* and being *sent*, spoken so often of the *first* in reference to the *second*, and of the *first* and *second* in reference to the *third*, as not to need the quoting of places. If the same man were a king, a general,

[1] Prov. viii. 22, 23. [2] Ver. 27. [3] Ver. 30. [4] John i. 1.
[5] John i. 10. [6] Ver. 14. [7] Chap. xiv. 17. [8] Ver. 26.
[9] Chap. xv. 26. [10] Chap. xvi. 8. [11] Ver. 13, 14.

and a judge, methinks it would not well square with the usual forms of speaking among men (and God speaks to men as men) to say, that, as the first, he sends the two latter, that is, himself!

And one would think our being required to be baptized in the distinct names of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost should signify some greater distinction: as also that three are said to bear witness in heaven. I doubt that in a cause wherein our law requires two or more witnesses, the same man that should be a father, a brother, and a son, would scarce thereupon be admitted for three witnesses.

And how the *incarnation* of the Son can be understood according to your notion of person, without the Father's and Holy Ghost's incarnation also, I confess I cannot apprehend. Your notion of a *person* contradistinct to the scholastic notion, as was said before, seems to leave the Godhead to be but *one hypostasis*, or *person*, in the latter sense. How then are we to conceive of the hypostatical union? The assumed nature will be as much hypostatically united with the Father or the Spirit, as with the Son.

4. And doth not this civil, or merely respective, notion of a person,—the other being left,—fall in with the Antitrinitarian? Will it not make us Unitarians only, as they affect to call themselves? Would any of them who (as you are pleased to take notice, Letter VI.[1]) say, 'None but a madman would deny there may be three persons in God,' have been so mad (not yet professing themselves converts) as to say so, if they had not supposed their cause not hurt by this notion of a person? For, as you well say, Letter I., 'we need not be fond of words, so the thing be agreed;' so have they equal reason to say, we need not be afraid of words, if in the sense you agree with us: and with *one* sort of them I only desire you to consider how great an appearance the asserting only of three persons, in the one sense, quitting the other, will carry of an agreement.

And have they not all the advantage left them which they

[1] Pp. 1, 2.

seek in arguing against the satisfaction made by our Saviour from the necessity of an *alterity;* that in the business of making satisfaction there must be *alter atque alter, one who satisfies, and another who is satisfied?* I do very well know what instances are brought of human rulers making satisfaction for delinquents; but there is no parity in the cases,—they being themselves debtors to the governed community, as God is not, who hath with most undoubted righteousness "made all things for himself."

5. And consider whether by your notion of a person you forsake not the generality of them who have gone, as to this point, under the repute of orthodox? who no doubt have understood by three persons, three intelligent *hypostases;* though they have differed in thinking,—some of them,—that only a τρόπος ὑπάρξεως was the *genitum* or *spiratum* as to the two latter: a notion that is either too fine or too little solid for some minds to grasp or take any hold of: others, that the Divine nature might itself be some way said to be communicated to them. But I pass to the

II. Inquiry, whether some further distinction may not be admitted as possible? The only thing that straitens us here, is the most unquestionable *unity* or *unicity* (as we may call it) of the Godhead: which, if it cannot be otherwise defended, I must yet for my part, notwithstanding these hardships, (and I know no man with whom I could do it with more inclination,) fall in with you. But I must crave it of *you* so far to fall in with you know not who, as to apply your clearer mind, as I do my more cloudy one, to consider whether it can or no. You will here say, 'Further than what? and what would I have further?'

To the former of these I only say,—further than the assorting, in very deed, but one *hypostasis* in the Godhead, distinguished no otherwise into three than by certain relative capacities like those which may among men be sustained by one and the same man; and which distinction, as you after add, is analogous to what, in created beings, is called *distinctio modalis.*

To the latter,—I desire you to observe what I generally propose; not that we may positively assert any further determinate distinction as certain and known, but only whether we may not admit some further distinction to be possible, in consistency with the unity of the Godhead. I do equally detest and dread to speak with rash and peremptory confidence about things both so mysterious and so sacred. But may we not modestly say, that if, to that economy which God hath represented himself in his word to bear and keep afoot towards his creatures, any further distinction than hath been assigned is *necessary*, it is also *possible?* and may *be* for aught we know, if indeed we know nothing to the contrary. What is impossible we are sure cannot be necessary. But God himself best and only knows his own nature, and what his own meaning is in the representation he hath made to us. If we sincerely aim to understand his meaning, that we may bear ourselves towards him accordingly, he will with merciful indulgence consider our *short* or *mis*-apprehensions. But we need not say there is not this or that distinction, if really we do not know there is not. While we know so little of natures inferior to our own, and even of our own nature, and how things are distinguished that belong to ourselves, we have little reason to be shy of confessing ignorance about the nature of God.

Therefore I most entirely agree to the two conclusions of the ingenious W. J., wherewith he concludes his letter: but in the meantime (and pursuantly enough thereto) cannot but doubt the concludingness of his very acute reasonings against at least some of the expressions of that learned person, Dr. Sherlock, which he animadverts upon, as I perceive you also do;[1] and even W. J. himself, for with a pious modesty he tells us—'concerning infinite natures he presumes not to determine.'[2]

What he objects against that author's having said 'the Divine persons are three beings really distinct,' (wherein I instance, not intending to run through that elaborate letter,)

[1] Page 16 of your seventh Letter. [2] Letter, p. 8.

that then there must be three distinct essences,—seems to me a *πάρεργον*. I doubt not the author will easily admit it. But what will be the consequence? That therefore there are three Deities? That cannot be his meaning nor be consequent from it, if he only mean that the Deity comprehends in it three such essences. If indeed he think those three beings are as distinct as Peter, James, and John: what is said by W. J. against him, I think irrefragable,—that then they are no otherwise one, than Peter, James, and John: and by him against himself; for Peter, James, and John are not mutually self-conscious, as *they* are asserted to be: which mutual self-consciousness, since it is supposed to make the three Divine persons one, cannot be supposed to leave them so distinct as they are with whom it is not found.

As to what is observed of the defective expression of this unitive principle by the word 'consciousness,'—that bare consciousness, without consent, is no more than bare omniscieney,—sure it is not so much; for consciousness doth not signify omniscieney. We are conscious to ourselves, yet are not omniscient. But I reckon, as I find he also doth, that even consent, added to consciousness, would yet leave the expression defective, and still want the unifying power which is sought after. For it would infer no more than a sort of moral union, which, in the kind of it, may be found among men; between whom there is so little of natural union—speaking of the numerical nature—that they are actually separate.

But now may we not suppose (as that which is *possible*, and actually *is*, for aught we know) what may be fundamental to both consciousness and consent,—a natural union even of the numerical natures? Such a union would not infer a unity or identity of these natures, essences, substances, or beings themselves. For, as W. J. hath well argued,[1] 'Substances upon union are not confounded or identified, or brought to unity of substance; but continuing numerically distinct substances, acquire some mutual community or communication of operations,' etc. And deferring the consideration

[1] Letter, pp. 5, 6.

awhile what this would signify towards the unity, notwithstanding, of the Godhead, we shall take notice how accommodately to our present purpose W. J. speaks in what follows; where, instancing in the chief unions that are known to us, he says, 'Our soul and body are two substances really distinct, and in close union with one another. But notwithstanding this, they continue distinct substances under that union. In like manner the human soul of Christ is in union with the *Logos*, or second person of the trinity, which we call an hypostatical union. But neither doth this union make a unity of substance. For the two substances of the Divine and human natures continue distinct under that union.' It is true, he adds, 'which must not be allowed in the unity of the Godhead, where there can be no plurality or multiplicity of substances.' Nor do I say that it must; I only say, Do we know, or are we sure, there is *no sort* of plurality?

But if we are sure that there are temporal unions, that is, begun in time,—as in ourselves, for instance, of two substances that make but one man, and in our Saviour a human nature and Divine that make but one Immanuel,—how do we know but that there may be three in the Godhead that make but one God? And the rather because, this being supposed, it must also be supposed that they are necessarily and eternally united, and with a conjunct natural impossibility of ever being or having been otherwise; whereof the absolute immutability of God must upon that supposition most certainly assure us. And such a supposed union will be most remote from making the Deity an aggregate. And for anything of composition,—I reckon we are most strictly bound to believe everything of the most perfect simplicity of the Divine Being which his word informs us of, and to assent to everything that is with plain evidence demonstrable of it; but not everything which the schools would impose upon us without such testimony or evidence. For as none can "know the things of a man, but the spirit of man which is in him; so nor can any know the things of God, but the Spirit of God." Nor can I think the argument concluding, from the imperfection of a being in

which distinct things concur that were separate, or are *de novo* united, to the imperfection of a being, in which things some way distinct are necessarily and eternally self-united: nor can therefore agree with W. J. that we are to look, universally, upon real distinction as a mark of separability; or that clear and distinct conception is to us the rule of partibility. For though I will not affirm that to be the state of all created spirits, yet I cannot deny it to be possible that God might have created such a being as should have in it distinct assignable parts, all of them essential to it, and not separable from it without the cessation of the whole. But now, as the accession of the human nature to the Divine in the hypostatical union infers no imperfection to the Divine, so much less would what things we may suppose naturally, necessarily, and eternally united in the Godhead infer any imperfection therein.

I easily admit what is said by W. J.[1] 'That we have no better definition of God, than that he is—a Spirit infinitely perfect.' But then, being so far taught by himself my conception of him, I must include in it this trinal distinction, or a triple 'somewhat' which he affirms of himself, and without which, or any one whereof, he were not infinitely perfect, and consequently not God, and that all together do make one God. As you most aptly say of your resemblance of him, a cube,—there are in it three dimensions truly distinct from each other, yet all these are but one cube; and if any one of the three were wanting, it were not a cube.

Set this down then for the notion of God, that he is a Spirit infinitely perfect, comprehending in that omnimodous perfection a trinal distinction, or three persons truly distinct, each whereof is God. What will be the consequence? that therefore there are three Gods? Not at all; but that each of these partaking Divine nature give us an inadequate, and all together a most perfectly adequate and entire, notion of God. Nor would the language of this hypothesis, being pressed to speak out, (as he says in his letter,) be this—'These are not

[1] Letter, p. 8.

fit to be called three Gods,' but 'Not possible, with any truth, to be so called.'

And whereas he after tells us: These three, being united by similitude of nature, mutual consciousness, consent, co-operation under the greatest union possible, and in that state of union, do constitute the τὸ θεῖον, the entire all-comprehensive Godhead; and adds, this looks somewhat like a conceivable thing,—to this I note two things:

1. That he makes it not look like so conceivable a thing, as it really may do. For he leaves out the most important thing, that was as supposable as any of the rest, and prior to a mere similitude; namely, a natural union of these supposed distinct essences, without which they are not under the greatest union possible; and which, being supposed necessary and eternal, cannot admit these should be more than one God.

2. I note, that what he opposes to it (so defectively represented) is as defective,—that 'the Christian trinity doth not use to be represented thus,' etc. What hurt is there in it, if it can be more intelligibly represented than hath been used? But his gentle treatment of this hypothesis, — which he thought, as he represents it, not altogether unintelligible, and which with some help may be more intelligible,—became one inquiring what might most safely, and with least torture to our own minds, be said or thought in so awful a mystery. It however seems not proper to call this a hypostatical union—much less to say it amounts to no more. It amounts not to so much. For a hypostatical or personal union would make the terms united (the *unita*, the things or 'somewhats' under this union) become by it one hypostasis or person; whereas this union must leave them distinct persons or hypostases, but makes them one God. In the use of the phrase *hypostatical* or personal union, the denomination is not taken from the subject of the union, as if the design were to signify that to be divers *hypostases*, or persons, but from the effect or result of the mentioned union, to signify that which results to be one person or *hypostasis:* as the matter is plain in the instance wherein it is of most noted use,—the case of the two natures

united in the one person of the Son of God; where the things united are not supposed to be two persons, but two natures so conjoined as yet to make but one person; which therefore is the negative result or effect of the union; namely, that the person is not multiplied by the accession of another nature, but remains still only one. But this were a union quite of another kind; namely, of the three *hypostases* still remaining distinct, and concurring in one Godhead. And may not this be supposed without prejudice to its perfection?

For the schools themselves suppose themselves not to admit a composition prejudicial to the perfection of the Godhead, when they admit three modes of subsistence which are distinct from one another and from the Godhead; which they *must* admit. For if each of them were the very Godhead, each of them (as is urged against us by you know who) must have three persons belonging to it, as the Godhead hath. And yourself acknowledge three *somewhats* in the Godhead distinct, or else they could not be three. I will not here urge that if they be three somewhats, they must be three things, not three nothings; for however uneasy it is to assign a medium between something and nothing, I shall waive that metaphysical contest; but yet collect, that *simplicity* in the very strictest sense that can be conceived is not, in your account, to be ascribed to God, either according to his own word or the reason of things.

It may here be urged, How can we conceive this natural union, as I have adventured to phrase it, of the three persons, supposing them distinct things, substances, or spirits? Is such a union conceivable as shall make them be but one God, and not be such as shall make them cease to be three distinct things, substances, or spirits? We find indeed the mentioned unions of soul and body in ourselves, and of the two natures in Christ, consistent enough with manifest distinction; but then the things united are in themselves of most different natures. But if things of so congenerous a nature be united, will not their distinction be lost in their union?

I answer—1. That a spirit and a spirit are numerically as

distinct, as a body and a spirit: and, 2. That we may certainly conceive it as possible to God to have united two or three created spirits, and by as strict union as is between our souls and bodies, without confounding them; and I reckon the union between our souls and bodies much more wonderful than *that* would have been. Why then is an unmade, uncreated union of three spirits less conceivable as that which is to be presupposed to their mutual consciousness?

I shall not move, or meddle with, any controversy about the infinity of these three supposed substances or spirits, it being acknowledged on all hands that contemplations of that kind cannot but be above our measure: and well knowing how much easier it is to puzzle oneself upon that question, *An possit dari infinitum infinito infinitius*, than to speak satisfyingly and unexceptionably about it to another.

And though I will not use the expressions, (as signifying my formed judgment,) that there are three things, substances, or spirits in the Godhead, as you that there are three *somewhats;* yet, as I have many years thought, I do still think, that what the learned W. J. doth but more lightly touch of the Son and the Holy Ghost being produced (which term I use, but reciting it, as he doth) not by a voluntary external, but by an internal, necessary, and emanative act, hath great weight in it.

In short, my sense hath long lain thus, and I submit it to your searching and candid judgment; namely, that though we need not have determinate thoughts, how far the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are distinguished; yet we must conceive them in the general to be so far distinguished as is really necessary to the founding the distinct attributions which the Scriptures do distinctly give them: and that whatever distinction is truly necessary to that purpose will yet not hinder the two latters' participation with the *first* in the Godhead, which can be but one; because that though we are led by plain Scripture, and the very import of that word, to conceive of the Father as the Fountain, yet the Son being from him, and the Holy Ghost from them both, not contingently,

or dependently on will and pleasure, but by eternal, natural, necessary promanation, these two latter are infinitely distinguished from the whole creation; inasmuch as all creatures are contingent beings, or dependent upon will and pleasure,— as the character is given us of created things: "Thou hast made all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created:"[1] but that whatever is what it is necessarily, is God. For I have no doubt but the dreams of some, more anciently and of late, concerning necessary matter; and the sophisms of Spinosa and some others, tending to prove the necessity and identity of all substance; are, with what they aim to evince, demonstrably false. The sum of all will be this,—

1. That we can be more certain of nothing than that there is but one God.

2. We are most sure the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are sufficiently distinguished to give a just ground to the distinct attributions, which are in the Scripture severally given to them.

3. We are not sure what that sufficient distinction is,— wherein I find you saying with me over and over; but whereas you rightly make the word *person* applicable to God, but in a sense analogous to that which obtains of it with men; why may it not be said it may be fitly applicable, for aught we know, in a sense analogous to that notion of it among men, which makes a *person* signify an intelligent *hypostasis*, and so three distinct persons, three distinct intelligent *hypostases*.

4. But if that sufficient distinction can be no less than that there be in the Godhead three distinct intelligent *hypostases*, each having its own distinct singular intelligent nature, with its proper personality belonging to it, we know nothing to the contrary, but that the necessary eternal nature of the Godhead may admit thereof. If any can from plain Scripture testimony or cogent reason, evince the contrary, let the evidence be produced. In the meantime we need not impose upon ourselves any formal denial of it.

[1] Rev. iv. 11.

5. If the contrary can be evidenced, and that hereupon it be designed to conclude that there can be but one intelligent *hypostasis* in the Godhead, and therefore that the Son and the Holy Ghost are but creatures, the last refuge must be to deny the former consequence; and to allege that though the same finite singular nature cannot well be understood to remain entirely to one, and be communicated entirely to another, and another, the case will not be the same, speaking of an infinite nature.

Sir, if what is here said shall occasion to you any new thoughts that you shall judge may be of common use, I conceive there will be no need of publishing my letter; but only that you be pleased to communicate your own sentiments, as from yourself, which will have so much the more of authority and usefulness with them. The most considerable thing that I have hinted is the *necessary* promanation of the Son and Holy Ghost, that must distinguish them from contingent beings, and so from creatures; which if you think improvable to any good purpose,—as it hath been with me a thought many years old, so I suppose it not new to you; and being now resumed by you, upon this occasion, you will easily cultivate it to better advantage than any words of mine can give it.

But if you think it advisable that any part of my letter be published,—if you please to signify your mind to that purpose in one line to ——, marked ——, it will come sealed to my view; and will give opportunity of offering my thoughts to you, what parts I would have suppressed; which will be such only as shall leave the rest the fuller testimony of my being,

Sir,
Your most sincere honourer, and most
respectful humble servant,

ANONYM.

Poiret's method of proving a trinity in the Godhead, though it call itself mathematical or geometrical, is with me much less convictive than the plain Scriptural way.

LETTER II.

Sir,—Your eighth letter happening to come to my view before it was printed off, I have the opportunity of taking notice to you that it quite misrepresents the intent of the letter to you subscribed 'Anonymous,' which it makes to be the defending or excusing some expressions of Dr. Sherlock's; which indeed was the least considerable thing, if it were anything at all, in the design of that letter, and not altogether accidental to it. The true design of it was,—that there might be a clearer foundation asserted (as possible at least) to the doctrine of the incarnation and satisfaction of the Son of God. Nor can the *fortè quod sic* here be solved by the *fortè quod non*, the exigency of the case being such, as that *if more be possible* it will be *highly requisite;* and that it cannot well be avoided to assert more, unless it can be clearly evinced that more is impossible. Nor yet is it necessary to determine how much more is necessary. But not only the commonly received frame of Christian doctrine doth seem to require somewhat beyond what the mere civil or respective notion of the word *person* imports, but also the plain letter of Scripture; which says, Heb. i. 3, that the Son is the express image of the Father's *hypostasis*, which seems to signify there are two *hypostases;* and other Scriptures seem to say enough whence we may with parity of reason collect a third. Now that letter intimates, I think, sufficient matter of doubt, whether *hypostasis* doth not signify much more than *person* in your sense.

The principal thing that letter humbly offered to consideration,—that is, whether, supposing a greater distinction than you have assigned be necessary, it may not be defended by the just supposal that the promanation of the second or third persons, or *hypostases* rather, howsoever diverse they are, is by natural eternal necessity, not contingent or depending upon will and pleasure, as all created being is and doth,—is altogether waived. That letter was written with design of giving you the occasion of considering what might

be further requisite and possible to be asserted for the serving of the truth, and with that sincerity and plenitude of respect to you, that it might be wholly in your own power to do it in such a way as wherein not at all to disserve yourself:—which temper of mind is still the same with

Rev. Sir,

Your most unfeigned honourer,
and humble servant,
ANONYM.

December, '91.

LETTER III.

Worthy Sir,—I am very loath troublesomely to importune you. But the very little time I had for the view of your eighth letter, before I wrote mine by the last post, not allowing me fully to write my sense as to that part which concerned my former letter, I take leave now to add;—that my design in it, as well as the professed design of the letter itself, was to offer you the occasion of employing that clear understanding wherewith God hath blessed you above most, in considering whether a greater latitude cannot be allowed us in conceiving the *distinction* of the three in the Godhead consistently with the *unity* thereof, than your notion of a *person* will extend to: and if it can, whether it ought not to be represented, at least as possible, to give a less exceptionable ground to the doctrines of the incarnation and satisfaction of the second person, in order whereto it seems to me highly requisite. This was that I really intended, and not the vindicating the sentiments of that author, which you might observe that letter animadverts upon. The Scripture seems to allow a greater latitude, by the ground it gives us to apprehend *three hypostases;* which so much differ from the notion you give of *persons*, that one *hypostasis* may sustain three such persons as you describe. The only thing that seems to straiten us in this matter, is the usual doctrine of the

schools about the Divine *simplicity*. I confess I greatly coveted to have had your thoughts engaged in sifting and examining that doctrine; so far as to consider whether there be really anything in it cogent and demonstrable, that will be repugnant to what is overturned in that letter. And I the rather desired more room might be gained in this matter, apprehending the Unitarians (as they more lately affect to call themselves) might, upon the whole, think you more theirs than ours; and while they agree with you concerning the possibility of such a trinity as you assert, may judge their advantage against the other mentioned doctrines no less than it was.

My desiring that letter of mine might not be printed was most agreeable to what I intended in writing it; that was, only to suggest to you somewhat—very loosely—that I reckoned you more capable than any man I knew, to cultivate and improve, to the great service of the common Christian cause: and that you might seem to say, what you might upon your own search find safe and fit to be said, as merely from yourself, without taking notice that occasion was given you by any such letter at all. Had I designed it for public view, it should have been writ with more care, and with more (expressed) respect to you. But if, upon the whole, you judge there is nothing in it considerable to the purposes it mentions, my further request is, you will please rather to suppress that part of your letter which concerns it,—for which I suppose there is yet opportunity,—and take no notice any such letter came to your hands. I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your most respectful,

humble servant,

ANONYM.

December 19, '91.

SUMMARY PROPOSITIONS

Collected out of the foregoing Discourses, more briefly offering to view the substance of what is contained in them.

1. Of the *unity* of the Godhead there can be no doubt, it being in reason demonstrable, and most expressly often asserted in Scripture.

2. That there is a *trinity* in the Godhead, of Father, Son, or Word, and Holy Ghost, is the plain, obvious sense of so many Scriptures, that it apparently tends to frustrate the design of the whole Scripture revelation and to make it useless, not to admit this *trinity*, or otherwise to understand such Scriptures.

3. That therefore the devising any other sense of such Scriptures ought by no means to be attempted, unless this *trinity* in the Godhead can be evidently demonstrated to be impossible.

4. That the impossibility of it can never be demonstrated from the mere *unity* of the Godhead, which may be such as to admit these distinctions in it, for aught we know.

5. Nothing is more appropriate to the Godhead than to be a necessarily existent, intelligent Being; since all creatures, whether intelligent or unintelligent, are contingent, depending upon the will of the necessary, intelligent Being.

6. If therefore the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost do co-exist in the Godhead necessarily, they cannot but be God.

7. And if the first be conceived as the fountain, the second as by natural, necessary,—not voluntary,—promanation from the first, the third by natural, necessary,—not voluntary,—spiration, so as that neither of these latter could have been otherwise; this aptly agrees with the notions of Father, Son, and Spirit distinctly put upon them, and infinitely distinguishes the two latter from all creatures that depend upon will and pleasure.

8. Whatever distinction there be of these three among

themselves, yet the first being the original, the second being by that promanation necessarily and eternally united with the first, the third by such spiration united necessarily and eternally with both the other,—inasmuch as eternity and necessity of existence admit no change, this union must be inviolable and everlasting, and thereupon the Godhead which they constitute can be but one.

9. We have among the creatures and even in ourselves, instances of very different natures, continuing distinct, but so united as to be one thing; and it were more easily supposable of congenerous natures.

10. If such union with distinction be impossible in the Godhead, it must not be from any repugnancy in the thing itself, since very intimate union, with continuing distinction, is in itself no impossible thing; but from somewhat peculiar to the Divine Being.

11. That peculiarity, since it cannot be unity, (which because it may admit distinctions in one and the same thing, we are not sure it cannot be so in the Godhead,) must be that simplicity commonly wont to be ascribed to the Divine nature.

12. Such simplicity as shall exclude that distinction which shall appear necessary in the present case, is not by express Scripture anywhere ascribed to God; and therefore must be rationally demonstrated of him, if it shall be judged to belong at all to him.

13. Absolute simplicity is not a perfection, nor is by any ascribed to God: not by the Socinians themselves, who ascribe to him the several intellectual and moral excellencies that are attributed to him in the Scriptures, of which they give very different definitions, as may be seen in their own Volkelius at large; which should signify them not to be counted, in all respects, the same thing.

14. That is not a just consequence which is the most plausible one that seems capable of being alleged for such absolute simplicity,—that otherwise there would be a composition admitted in the Divine nature, which would import

an imperfection inconsistent with Deity. For the several excellencies that concur in it—howsoever distinguished—being never put together, nor having ever existed apart, but in eternal, necessary union, though they may make some sort of variety, import no proper composition; and carry with them more apparent perfection than absolute omnimodous simplicity can be conceived to do.

15. Such a supposed possible variety even of individual natures in the Deity, some way differing from each other, infers not an unbounded liberty of conceiving what pluralities therein we please or can imagine. The Divine revelation, which could only justify, doth also limit us herein, mentioning three distinct *I's* or *He's*, and no more.

16. The several attributes which are common to these three, do to our apprehension, and way of conceiving things, require less distinction; no more, for aught we know, than may arise from their being variously modified according to the distinction of objects, or other extrinsical things, to which they may be referred.

We that so little know how our own souls, and the powers and principles that belong to them, do differ from one another, and from them, must be supposed more ignorant, and should be less curious, in this.

A LETTER TO A FRIEND

CONCERNING

A POSTSCRIPT TO THE DEFENCE OF DR. SHERLOCK'S NOTION

OF THE

TRINITY IN UNITY,

RELATING TO THE CALM AND SOBER INQUIRY UPON THE SAME SUBJECT.

Sir,—I find a postscript to the newly published defence of Dr. Sherlock's notion of the 'Trinity in Unity,' takes notice of the 'Inquiry concerning the possibility of a trinity in the Godhead.' He that writes it seems somewhat out of humour, or not in such as it is decent to hope is more usual with him: and I cannot guess for what, unless that one, whom he imagines a dissenter, hath adventured to cast his eyes that way that he did his. But for that imagination he may have as little ground, as I to think the dean's defender is the dean; and as little as he had to say the inquirer took great care that no man should suspect that he favours the dean in his notion,—where he is quite out in his guess: for the inquirer took no such care at all, but nakedly to represent his own sentiments as they were, whether they agreed with the dean's, or wherein they differed: and really cares not who knows that he hath not so little kindness either for truth or for him, as to abandon or decline what he thinks to be true for his sake, or (as he expressed himself p. 29 of that discourse) because he said it.

But the defender represents the dean as much of another

temper, and that he will thank him for not favouring him in his notions. But yet he says, that though the inquirer doth not in every particular say what the dean says, yet he says what will justify him against the charge of tritheism. And is there any hurt to him in that? What a strange man doth he make the dean; as if he could not be pleased unless he alone did engross truth! Will he thank a man for not favouring his notions, and yet would blame him for not saying in every particular what he says, though he say what will justify him against the heaviest charge framed against him? may one neither be allowed to agree with him, nor disagree?

But, Sir, the defender's discourse hath no design (nor I believe he himself) to disprove the possibility of a trinity in the ever-blessed Godhead. Therefore the inquirer is safe from him as to the principal design he is concerned for; it is all one to him if it still appear possible, in what way it be so represented, that is intelligible, consistent with itself, and with other truth; so that it is hardly worth the while to him, further to inquire whether the dean's *hypostasis* or his be better, if either be found unexceptionably safe and good. But because the defender hath, to give preference to the one, misrepresented both, with some appearing disadvantage to the cause itself, what he says ought to be considered. And the whole matter will be reduced to this twofold inquiry:

1. Whether the inquirer hath said more than the dean, or more than is defensible, of the distinction of the sacred three in the Godhead.

2. Whether the dean hath said so much as the inquirer, or so much as was requisite, of their union.

1. For the former; the defender, p. 103, mentions the dean's notion of three infinite minds or spirits; and makes the inquirer to have been proving three spirits, three distinct essences, three individual natures, in the Godhead; and then adds, 'for my part, I cannot tell where the difference is, unless it be in the term infinite.' It is indeed strange the inquirer should have said more than the dean, if there were

no difference unless in the term infinite, wherein he must have said infinitely less.

But he at length apprehends another difference, though he after labours to make it none; namely, that the inquirer disputes, but asserts nothing; and he fancies he doth so to shelter himself from the animadverter, of whom he says he seems to be terribly afraid. Here he puts the dean into a fit of kindness and good-nature,—allowing the inquirer to partake with him in his fears, though not in his notions, as more sacred. But he herein understands not the inquirer, who, if he had been so terribly afraid, could very easily have said nothing; and who was really afraid of a greater Animadverter,—thinking it too great boldness, under *His* eye, to speak confidently of His own peculiarities, and that lay folded up in so venerable darkness. He thought it enough,—in opposition to the daring person (whosoever he was) with whom he was concerned, that so peremptorily pronounced the trinity an absurdity, a contradiction, nonsense, and an impossibility,—to represent what he proposed as possible for aught he knew.

And now the defender will have the dean to have done no more; and with all my heart let him have done no more, if he and his animadverter, and the rest of the world, will so agree it: but he will have the inquirer to have done more, and to be much more exposed to the charge of tritheism by asserting three distinct essences, three individual natures, and three spiritual beings in the Godhead. This is indeed very marvellous, that the inquirer should expose himself to the charge of tritheism by asserting all this, when but a few lines before, upon the same page, he is said to have asserted nothing! But he may as well make the inquirer in asserting nothing to have asserted all this, as the dean in asserting all this to have asserted nothing.

And where the inquirer hath said in express words that the sacred three are three distinct substances I cannot find; and we must in great part alter the common notion of 'substance' to make it affirmable of God at all; namely, that it

doth *substare accidentibus*, which I believe the dean will, no more than the inquirer, suppose the Divine Being to admit. But it is true that there is somewhat more considerable in the notion of substance, according whereto, if the dean can make a shift to avoid the having of any inconvenient thing proved upon him by consequence, I hope the inquirer may find a way to escape as well.

But whereas he says, 'The dean allows but one Divine essence, and one individual nature, in the Godhead repeated in three persons, but without multiplication,'—as he says he had already explained it,—this hath occasioned me to look back to that explanation; and if he thinks the allowing but one Divine essence and one individual nature in the Godhead, will agree with what the dean hath said in his vindication, I shall not envy him, nor *now* go about to disprove it. But I confess I see not how it can agree with what the defender says in this his explanation itself, when,[1] he tells us, 'the Son is the living subsisting image of the Father; and the image and the prototype cannot be the same, but must be two. No man is his own image, nor is an image the image of itself:' and he adds, 'this is so self-evident,' etc. But whereas the distinction all this while might be understood to be but *modal*,—and that appears to be the defender's present, whatever was the dean's former, meaning,—that the three subsistences differ only in their different manner of subsisting; yet with this meaning his other words do little agree, for he plainly asserts a real distinction of three in the same individual numerical nature. And who did ever make a real distinction to be but modal? More expressly he had said before[2] the Divine nature is 'one individual nature, but not one single nature; for one single nature can be but one person whether in God or man.'

I shall not here discuss with him the criticism upon which he lays so mighty stress, of one individual nature and one single nature, but take the terms he chooses; and if the Divine nature be not one single nature, it must be double, it

[1] Page 23.

[2] Page 18.

must be triple. And what doth this come to less than three natures? unless all ordinary forms of speech must be quite abandoned and forsaken. And wherein doth it come short of what is said by the inquirer?[1] 'This term *individual* must (in the case now supposed, as *possible* not as *certain*) admit of a twofold application, either to the distinct essence of the Father, or of the Son, or of the Holy Ghost; or to the entire essence of the Godhead, in which these three do concur. Each of these conceived by itself, are according to this supposition individual essences, but conceived together they are the entire individual essence of God; for there is but one such essence and no more, and it can never be multiplied nor divided into more of the same name and nature.' Duplicity, triplicity, are admitted; simplicity rejected, if simple and single be of the same signification. Where is the difference, but that the one thinks absolute omnimodous simplicity is not to be affirmed of the Divine nature, as he often speaks; the other says downright, it is not single or simple without limitation? The one denies multiplication of it, so doth the other. The one indeed speaks positively, the other doth but suppose what he says as possible, not certain. And there is indeed some difference between supposing a thing as possible, for aught one knows; and affirming it so positively, as to impute heresy and nonsense to all gainsayers. But both bring for proof the same thing,—the incarnation; as in the postscript, the defender takes notice the inquirer doth. And so doth he himself in his letter:[2]—'The Divine nature was incarnate in Christ, he was perfect God and perfect man; and if there was but one single Divine nature in all three persons, this one single Divine nature was incarnate; and therefore the Father and the Holy Ghost, who are this single Divine nature, as well as the Son, must be as much incarnate as the Son was.' He makes the contrary absurd; and brings in, fitly enough, Victorinus Afer teaching that we ought not to say, nor is it lawful to say, that there is but one substance; that is, as he paraphrases it, one single sub-

[1] Sect. xix. [2] Page 102.

sisting nature (therefore there must be three single subsisting natures) and three persons. For if this same substance did and suffered all (*Patri-passiani et nos*) we must be Patripassians, which God forbid.

And what the defender alleges[1] from the ancients against the Sabellians, allowing only a trinity of names, and his taking the τρόποι ὑπάρξεως in the *concrete* not in the *abstract*, fully enough speaks the inquirer's sense; his accounting the contrary too fine and metaphysical for him, was what was writ to Dr. Wallis:[2] 'too fine or too little solid,' etc.

In short, till it can be effectually proved that mind and spirit do not signify somewhat as absolute as nature or essence,—or rather more than the former, which signifies the principle of operation as the other of being,—and till it can be as well proved that asserting a thing as certain, so as to pronounce it heresy and nonsense to think otherwise, is less than only to propose it as possible or inquire whether it be so or no, the dean must be judged by everyone that understands common sense, to have heightened the distinction of three persons at least as much as the inquirer. And whether the inquirer have supposed more than is defensible against the defender's objections, will be considered by and by in its proper place. In the meantime let it,

2. Be examined whether the dean has said as much for salving the unity of the Godhead as the inquirer; or as much as is requisite to that purpose. And here our business will be short; for it all turns upon that one single point, whether mutual consciousness be that union which must be acknowledged,—or *suppose* it only. For which we need only appeal to common reason, whether 'being' do not in the natural order precede even the power of working; and consequently whether *being united vitally* precede not the possibility of acting agreeably to that united state: whereupon the inquiry is not concerning *mutual conscience* only, but, as he speaks, *consciousness*. Is it possible any three persons or intelligent subsistences should naturally have vital percep-

[1] 'Letter,' pp. 24, 25. [2] 'Calm Discourse,' p. 126.

tion of each other's internal motions and sensations, without being vitally pre-united? I say *naturally;* for that God might give to three created spirits a *temporary perception* of each other without bringing them into a *stated union* each with other, is little to be doubted; as a spirit may assume a body and animate it *pro tempore* without being substantially united with it. And if that body were also a spirit, they might *pro tempore*, for aught we know, by extraordinary Divine disposition, (for within the ordinary course of nature we know of no such intimacy of created spirits to another,) be *quasi animæ* to one another. But if naturally they were so to mingle and transfuse sensations mutually into each other, they must be naturally, first, in vital union with one another. Nor therefore did the inquirer mistake the dean's notion as the defender fancies in the passage he quotes,[1] as if he took mutual consciousness for mere mutual perspection. For though *scire*, abstractedly taken, doth not signify more than *perspicere;* yet the inquirer in that passage,—speaking of a never so perfect mutual perspection,—properly enough expressed thereby as great a feeling such spirits were supposed to have of each other in themselves as mutual consciousness is apt to signify, or as the dean can yet be supposed to have meant; that perspection being more perfect which produces gusts and relishes suitable to the object, than that which stays in mere speculation only.

And upon the whole; it seems very strange the defender should say, 'If such an internal, vital sensation, be not an essential union, he believes no man can tell what it is.' For how can such actual sensation be imagined to be union? As well might the use of sense itself (speaking of anything singly to which it belongs) be said to be its constituent form; or, consequently, the doing anything that proceeds from reason, to be the form of a man: so the writing a book, should be the author! And whereas he says, 'it is certain the dean took it to be so, and therefore he did not leave out a natural eternal union;' it follows, indeed, that he did not leave it out in his

[1] Page 104.

mind and design, but he nevertheless left it out of his book, and therefore said not enough there to salve the unity of the Godhead; but ought to have insisted upon somewhat prior to mutual consciousness, as constituent of that unity; and which might make the three one, and not merely argue them to be so.

But now[1] he comes to find as great fault with the inquirer's way of maintaining this unity; and because he is resolved to dislike it, if he cannot find it faulty, sets himself to make it so.

The temper of mind wherewith he writes to this purpose what follows,[2] and onwards to the end, so soon and so constantly shows itself, that no man whose mind is not in the same disorder will upon trial apprehend anything in it but such heat as dwells in darkness. And he himself hath given the document which may be a measure to any apprehensive reader:[3] 'True Divine wisdom rests not on an ill-natured and perverse spirit;' I understand it, 'while the ill fit lasts.' But it is strange he could write those words without any self-reflection.

The thing to be revenged is, that the inquirer did freely speak his thoughts wherein he judged the dean's *hypothesis* defective,—his not taking notice of what he reckoned naturally antecedent and fundamental to mutual consciousness, a most intimate, natural, necessary, eternal union of the sacred three. If the inquirer spake sincerely, as he understood the matter and him, and it evidently appear the defender did *not* so, I only say the wronged person hath much the advantage, and wishes him no other harm than such gentle regrets as are necessary to set him right with himself, and his higher Judge.

He says, 'he (the inquirer) represents this *unity* by the union of soul and body, and by the union of the Divine and human nature,' etc. It is true, he partly doth so; but more fully by the supposed union of three created spirits; to which he that will may see, he only makes that a lower step; and he says, with respect especially to the former of these, 'That a union supposable to be originally, eternally, and by natural

[1] Page 105. [2] Page 105 [3] See his 'Letter,' p. 1.

necessity in the most perfect Being, is to be thought inexpressibly more perfect than any other.' But he adds, 'these are personal unions, and therefore cannot be the union of the Godhead.' And he very well knew (for he had but little before cited the passage) that the inquirer never intended them so, but only to represent that the union of the three in the Godhead could not be reasonably thought less possible.

What he further adds is much stranger: and yet herein I am resolved to put charity towards him to the utmost stretch, as he professes to have done his understanding,—for he says, 'As far as he can possibly understand,' and that 'he should be glad to be better informed,'—though there is some reason to apprehend that former displeasure darkened his understanding, and even dimmed his eyesight, which yet I hope hath its more lucid intervals, and that this distemper is not a fixed habit with him:—and what is it now that he cannot possibly understand otherwise?—'that no other union will satisfy him (namely, the inquirer) but such a union of three spiritual beings and individual natures as by their composition constitute the Godhead, as the composition of soul and body do the man;' that is, he cannot understand but he means what he expressly denies. Who can help so cross an understanding? If he had not had his very finger upon the place where the inquirer says[1] in express words, 'I peremptorily deny all composition in the being of God,' this had been more excusable;—besides much said to the same purpose[2] elsewhere. It had been ingenuous in any man not to impute that to another, as his meaning, which in the plainest terms he disavows, as none of his meaning: and it had been prudent in the dean (or his defender) of all mankind not to have done so in the present case, as will further be seen in due time. But he takes it for an affront, when he fancies a man to come too near him.

He adds, 'for this reason he disputes earnestly against the universal, absolute, omnimodous simplicity of the Divine nature; and will not allow that wisdom, power, and goodness,

[1] 'Calm Discourse,' Sect. xiii. [2] *Ibid.*, Postscript.

are the same thing in God, and distinguished into different conceptions by us only through the weakness of our understandings, which cannot comprehend an infinite Being in one thought, and therefore must, as well as we can, contemplate him by parts.' I know not what he means by *earnestly;* the matter was weighty, and it is true. He was, in writing about it, in no disposition to jest. But it is said, 'he disputed against the universal, absolute, omnimodous simplicity of the Divine nature.' I hope the defender in this means honestly, but he speaks very improperly; for it supposes him to think that the universal, absolute, omnimodous simplicity, so earnestly disputed against, did really belong to the Divine nature; but I can scarce believe him to think so, and therefore he should have said, his disputation tended to prove it not to belong. If he (namely, the defender, or the dean) did really think it did, *they*, or *he*, must be very singular in that sentiment. I would have them name me the man that ever laid down and asserted such a position. Some I know have said of that sacred Being, that it is *summè simplex*, or more simple than anything else; but that imports not universal, absolute, omnimodous simplicity, which is impossible to be a perfection, or therefore to belong to the Divine nature. No man that ever acknowledged a trinity of persons even modally distinguished, could ever pretend it; for such simplicity excludes all modes. Nay, the anti-trinitarians themselves can never be for it, as the 'Calm Discourse' hath shown. And if the dean be, he is gone into the remotest extreme from what he held,—and plainly enough seems still to hold,—that ever man of sense did.

But for what is added, that he 'will not allow that wisdom, power, and goodness, are the same thing in God:' this is not fairly said; civility allows me not to say, untruly. There is no word in the place he cites, nor anywhere in that book, that signifies 'not allowing'; it is intimated we are not instructed 'by the Scripture to conceive of the Divine nature, as, in every respect, most absolutely simple,' or that power, wisdom, goodness in the abstract, are the same thing, and that our

difficulty is great to apprehend them really undistinguishable. And let me seriously ask himself,—doth he in good earnest think it is only through the weakness of our understandings that we distinguish the notions of the Divine wisdom, power, and goodness? Certainly it were great weakness of understanding to define them alike. I believe he never met with the writer yet that distinguished them less than *ratione ratiocinatâ* in contradistinction to *ratiocinante*, which implies somewhat corresponding to our distinct notions of them, eminently and not formally, in *naturâ rei*.

And whereas he further says, 'This prepared his way to make goodness, wisdom, power,—a natural trinity in unity,' herein the defender is mistaken. This is not the *trinity* which the inquirer's discourse was ever intended to terminate in, as he himself hath expressly said, and the defender takes notice of it; which makes me wonder how he could think it was so intended,—citing the very passage,[1] where the inquirer 'professes not to judge, that we are under the precise notions of power, wisdom, and goodness, to conceive of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.' But why then were these three so much discoursed of before? They are three most celebrated Divine attributes, wherein we have our most immediate and very principal concern; and some have thought the trinity was most fitly to be conceived by them. The inquirer did not think so; but he thought, first, it would be requisite to have our minds disentangled from any apprehended necessity of conceiving them to be in all respects the very same things; nor are they the very same, if they be so distinguished as is expressed in the sixteenth of the 'Summary Propositions,'[2] where also they are each of them said to be common to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; whence therefore it is impossible they should be thought to distinguish Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; but that, some distinction being admitted even of them, this might facilitate to us our conception of the greater distinction which must be, of Father, Son, and Spirit;—as is expressed. Indeed he did not think fit to

[1] 'Calm Discourse,' etc., Sect. xiii.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 141.

interrupt his discourse by staying to show reasons why he did not rest in that account alone of the trinity, though it might seem plausible or not absurd ; but proceeded further to what was more satisfying to himself and might be so to other men. And (as the intervening series of his discourse leads thereto) this is more directly done, etc., especially where he comes to speak of the necessary co-existence, and the as necessary and natural order of the Father, Son, and Spirit, towards each other : the second being, not by any intervening act of will, but by necessary, eternal promanation, from the first, and the third from both. And the true reason why power, wisdom, and goodness, were not thought expressive of the distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit, but common to each of them (as is said, 'Summary Prop.' 16,) was, that the two latter cannot but be necessary emanations, most connatural to their original, as is truly suggested by the defender.[1]

If you object, (as the defender brings in the inquirer saying,) 'That this gives us the notion of a compounded Deity,' etc., this, that is, the supposition that absolute omnimodous simplicity belongs not to it, is the thing which may be thought to give us this notion. And he tells us, 'he (the inquirer) answers this difficulty, by giving us a new notion of a *compositum*. And what is that which he calls a new notion ? That a *compositum* seems to imply a pre-existing component, that brings such things together ; and supposes such and such more simple things to have pre-existed apart or separate, and to be brought afterwards together into a united state.'

And indeed is this a new notion ? As new as the creation. Let him show me an instance through the whole created universe of beings, (and for the uncreated Being, the defender, *now* at this time, disputes against any composition there, and the inquirer denies any,) first, where there hath been a *compositum* without a pre-existing component, or next, the compounded parts whereof, if substantial, did not in order of nature pre-exist separate ; that is, whether *esse simpliciter*, do not naturally precede *esse tale*, or, which is all one to our

[1] Page 111.

present purpose, whether they were not capable hereof if the Creator pleased. Let any man, I say, tell me where was there ever a *compositum* made by substantial union, that did not consist of once separate or of separable parts.

But note his admirable following supposition; that is to say, 'That if a man, (suppose) who consists of body and soul, had been from eternity without a maker, and his soul and body had never subsisted apart, he could not have been said to have been a compounded creature?' This is said with design most groundlessly (as we shall see) to fasten an absurd consequence upon the inquirer. And see how it looks; did ever any man undertake to reprove an absurdity with greater absurdity? A creature without a maker! what sort of creature must this be? We have a pretty saying quoted in the defender's letter: 'He that writes lies down;' and we are apt enough too, when we write, *to trip and fall down*, and ought in such cases to be merciful to one another, even though he that falls should be in no danger of hurting his forehead, much more if he be. What was another man's turn now, may be mine next.

But let the supposition proceed, and put we *being* instead of *creature*, which no doubt was the defender's meaning,—for creature he must needs know it could not be that had no maker. And what then? 'Why, he should not' (says he) 'have been said to be compounded, though he would have had the same parts that he has now.' We have here a self-confounding supposition, which having done that first, cannot hurt him whom it was designed to confound, being taken in season. Grant one, and you grant a thousand. A being made up of a soul and a body, is so imperfect an entity, as could not be of itself. Nothing is of itself which is not absolutely perfect. If he mind to disprove this, let him try his faculty when he pleases against it, and (which I sincerely believe he never intends) together with it, against all religion. But besides, he hath destroyed his own supposition himself, to put *us* out of that danger, by saying in plain words,[1]

[1] Page 10.

'We have no notion of an eternal and necessary existence, but in an absolute, perfect, and infinite nature.' Now say I, what is so perfect, and hath whatever belongs to it necessarily, though distinguishable things belong to it, hath no parts; for what are parts, but such things as can be parted? Such things as never were parted, and never can be, (as it is nonsense to talk of those things being parted that are united necessarily and of themselves,) are no parts, if *partiri*, whence they are so called, must not—and herein he cannot so fool the whole Christian world as to make it concur with him—lose its signification, to serve a turn. Though the things be real, their partibility is not real. If any indeed will call them *parts*, because they may be conceived or contemplated apart,—as *parts* merely conceptible are no prejudice to the perfection of the Divine Being, so are such conceivable parts acknowledged by this author himself in express words:[1] 'we cannot comprehend an infinite Being in one thought, and therefore must, as well as we can, contemplate him by parts.' God can as little admit to be a part of anything, as to have anything a part of him. And yet it is no prejudice to the dignity and perfection of his being, to conceive of him conjunctly with other things; as when we make him a *part* (subject or predicate) of a proposition. All his disputation therefore against parts and composition in the Deity, is against a figment, or no present adversary. For my part I am of his mind; and I should be obliged to thank him that this once he vouchsafes to let me be on his side, when he knows I am, if he did not take so vast pains to make others *not* know it. How hard a thing is it for an angry man, especially when he knows not why, to write with a sincere mind!

But hath he in all this fervent bluster a present concern at this time for the honour of the Divine Being,—as God forbid I should think he never hath? What is that he supposes injurious to it? Is it the words, parts and compounds? or is it the things supposed to be united in the Divine Being? The words he knows to be his own, and let him dispose of

[1] His 'Letter,' p. 105.

them more ineptly if he can tell how: parts that were never put together, never parted, nor ever shall be the one or other; that is, that never were or will be parts, and a compound of such parts! But now for the things upon which he would obtrude these words,—three essences, natures, (or if you please, infinite minds or spirits,) signified by the names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in eternal union, but distinct in the being of God:—let us consider his disputation against them united, or in union, according to its double aspect: first, upon the hypothesis or supposition of them: secondly, upon himself.

First, consider his disputation as levelled against the hypothesis or supposition of such distinct essences, natures, minds, spirits, in necessary, eternal union in the Divine Being. And one of his arguments against it is in those words of his: 'One principal argument against it' (here put out 'parts and composition' which are his own, and we have no more to do with them) 'is, that God is eternal and unmade; and whatsoever' ('hath parts,' says he,) 'hath such essences in it, must have a maker.' And here let him prove his consequence, and his business is done; namely, both ways, as will be seen by and by. But let him show the inconsistency between a thing's having such distinct essences naturally and necessarily united in it, (as the supposition to be argued against is, and before ought to have been justly stated,) and its being eternal and unmade. But how that is to be evinced I cannot so much as guess; confident affirmation, against the most obvious tenour of God's own word, is of little account. Who shall ascend into the heavens? or fathom the depths? or can have that perspection of God's incomprehensible nature, as without (and visibly against) his own revelation to be able, without great rashness, to pronounce so concerning him? But so toyish an argument as here follows, is worse than the position: that is, when one shall say, that for aught we know there may be three distinct essences, by an eternal unmade union, united into one, in the being of God; any man should say, and be so vain as to expect to be regarded,—that

because they are united by an eternal and unmade union, therefore they are *not* united by an eternal and unmade union! If there be not a contradiction in the terms, to disprove a thing by itself, is to say nothing, or is all one with proving a thing by itself. He proceeds to what hath nothing in it like an argument, but against his own conceit of *parts*, and *that* very trifling too: 'There can be but one eternal nature in God; but if there be three—there must be three.' This it is now come to, proving his point by itself. Here he makes sure work to have nothing denied; but then nothing is proved, no advance is made; if there be three, there must be three. But if there be three what? eternal *parts?* there must be three different natures, or else they—would be the same! What! though distinct? But this supposes somebody said the first: and who? Himself; therefore he is disproving himself. If I had said so, I would have denied his consequence, for there may be similar parts; whereas by different, he seems to mean dissimilar; he says, 'not only distinct, but different natures.' Now you have that wonderful thing talked of sometimes, but never brought to view before, a distinction without a difference. It is strange how any things should be distinct, and no way different. What distinguishes them if they differ by nothing? This *different*, applied to this present case, is his own word, coined to introduce a notion that is not new to Christians only, but to all mankind. If by different natures he means, as he seems, of a different kind, who thought of such a difference? But I trow, things that differ in number, do as truly differ, (however essentially cohering,) though not so widely.

His next is, that though we have a natural notion of an eternal Being, we have no notion of three eternal essences (which again I put instead of his parts) which necessarily coexist in an eternal union. Doth he mean we are to disbelieve everything of God whereof we have not a natural notion? Then to what purpose is a Divine revelation? Is this notion of God pretended to be *natural?* It is enough, if such a notion be most favoured by his own revelation,

who best understands his own nature, and there be no evident natural notion against it. He forgot that he had said,[1] 'If everything which we have no positive idea of must be allowed to contradict reason, we shall find contradictions enough;' adding, 'We must confess a great many things to be true, which we have no idea of,' etc. He adds, 'Once more, we have no notion of an eternal and necessary existence, but in an absolutely perfect and infinite nature; but if there be' (I here again leave out his three parts, because I design to consider if there be anything of strength brought against what was supposed possible by the inquirer, not against his fiction, which I trouble not myself any further with) 'three spiritual beings—neither of them can be absolutely perfect and infinite,' (I would rather have said none, or no one, than neither, since the discourse is of more than two; I thought the meaning of *uter* and *neuter* had been agreed long ago,) 'though we could suppose their union to make such a perfect Being, because they are not the same, and neither (no one) of them is the whole,' etc.

This is the only thing that ever came under my notice among the schoolmen, that hath any appearing strength in it, against the hypothesis which I have proposed as possible for aught I knew. They generally dispute against many sorts of compositions in the being of God, which I am not concerned in: that of matter and form, which is alien from this affair: of quantitative parts, which is as alien: of subject and accident, which touches us not; of act and power, which doth it as little, each subsistent being eternally in utmost actuality:—and by sundry sorts and methods of argument, whereof only this can seem to signify anything against the present supposition. And it wholly resolves into the notion of infinity, about which I generally spoke my sense in that first 'Letter to Dr. Wallis.'[2] And as I there intimated how much easier it is to puzzle another upon that subject than to satisfy oneself, so I here say, that I doubt not to give any man as much trouble about it in respect of quanti-

[1] 'Defence,' p. 5.

[2] See 'Calm Discourse,' etc.

tative extension, as he can me in this. I think it demonstrable that one Infinite can never be from another by voluntary production; that it cannot by necessary emanation, I think not so. In the meantime, when we are told so plainly by the Divine oracles, of a *sacred Three,* that are each of them God, and of some one whereof some things are spoken that are not nor can be of the others; I think it easier to count three than to determine of infiniteness, and accordingly to form one's belief. But of this more when we come to compare him with himself. And for what he discourses of the aspect this supposition hath upon the Trinity, and the Homoousion;[1] it all proceeds still upon his own fiction of *parts,* and upon the invidious straining of that similitude of the union of soul and body, as he himself doth *tantum non* confess; except that he lessens it by saying most untruly that he (the inquirer) doth expressly own the consequence. Therefore if he do not own the consequence, then the defender confesses himself to have invidiously devised it. And what is it? That if all three by this composition are but one God, neither of them by himself is true and perfect God. The divinity is like the English; but both his own. The inquirer denies both antecedent (which he knows) and consequent too. Leave out 'by this composition,' (his own figment,) and his argument as much disproves any trinity at all as it doth the present *hypothesis.*

But wherein doth the inquirer own it? because such a similitude is used (as it is often in that discourse) of the union between soul and body,—declared elsewhere to be unexpressibly defective; that therefore the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are each of them by himself no more truly Lord or God, according to the Athanasian creed, or otherwise than in as improper a sense, as the body of a man, excluding the soul, is a man, or a human person. Or as if Deity were no more in one of the persons, than humanity in a carcass! Who that looks upon all this with equal eyes, but will rather choose as doubtful a notion, than so apparently ill a spirit?

[1] Pages 108—110.

Are similitudes ever wont to be alike, throughout, to what they are brought to illustrate? It might as well be said, because he mentions with approbation such as illustrate the doctrine of the trinity by a tree and its branches, that, therefore, there we are to expect leaves and blossoms. Is it strange the created universe should not afford us an exact representation of uncreated Being? How could he but think of that; "To whom do ye liken me?" At least one would have thought he should not have forgot what he had so lately said himself.[1] We must grant we have no perfect example of any such union in nature. What appetite in him is it, that now seeks what nature doth not afford? A very unnatural one, we may conclude. It were trifling to repeat what was said and was so plain before,—that the union between soul and body was never brought to illustrate personal union, but essential. The former is here imagined without pretence, there being no mention or occasion for the mentioning of *persons* in the place he alleges.[2] But to make out his violent consequence he foists in a supposition, that never came into any man's imagination but a Socinian's and his own,—which I say, contradistinguishing him to them; that the matter may, as it ought, appear the more strange.[3] If God be a person, he can be but one. Is God the appropriate name of a person? then indeed there will be but one person; but who here says so but himself? The name God is the name of the essence, not the distinguishing name of a person. But if three intelligent natures be united in one Deity, each will be persons, and each will be God, and all will be one God; not by parts, other than conceptible, undivided, and inseparable, as the soul and body of a man are not: which sufficiently conserves the Christian trinity from such furious and impotent attacks as these. And the *homo-ousiotes* is most entirely conserved too: for what! are three spiritual natures no more the same, than (as he grossly speaks) the soul and body are? no more than an intelligent mind and a piece of clay? By what consequence is this

[1] His 'Letter,' p. 5. [2] 'Calm Discourse,' etc. [3] His 'Letter,' p. 110.

said, from anything in the inquirer's hypothesis? Whereas also he expressly insists,[1] that the Father, as *Fons trinitatis*, is first; the Son, of the Father; the Holy Ghost from both; is not the water in the streams the same that was in the fountain? and are not the[2] several attributes expressly spoken of as common to these three? essential power, wisdom, goodness, (which are denied to be the precise notions of Father, Son, and Spirit,) said by more than a περιχώρησις,—as that may be understood to signify mere presence, how intimate soever,—but by real vital union, as much each one's as any one's? and all other conceivable perfections besides? Why were these words read with eyes refusing their office, to let them into the reader's mind? whence also how fabulous is the talk of[3] power begetting wisdom, etc. against what is so plainly said[4] of the order of priority and posteriority, etc.

There had been some prudence seen in all this conduct, if the defender could have taken effectual care that everything should have been blotted out of all the copies of that discourse, but what he would have thought fit to be permitted to the view of other eyes than his own. For then, though in so gross prevarication he had not preserved his innocency, he might have saved in some degree his reputation. Yet also he should have taken some heed that anger might not so have discoloured his eye, as to make so injudicious a choice what to confess and what to conceal. For had he not himself blabbed that it was said we are not, under the precise notions of power, wisdom, and goodness, to conceive of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, he might more plausibly have formed his odd births and fathered them where he doth. But wrath indulged will show its governing power: and all this fury and vengeance (upon the inquirer, and the dean too) he reckoned was due, only because it was so presumptuously thought that somewhat in his hypothesis, or which he defends, might have been better, and that he probably sees it

[1] 'Calm Discourse,' etc., Sect. xvii. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 140.
[3] 'Postscript to his Letter,' p. 111. [4] 'Calm Discourse,' etc., Sect. xviii.

might; so much a greater thing (in some ill fits) is the gratifying a humour than the Christian cause!

Secondly. But let us now see how all this turns upon himself: and how directly his ill-polished (not to say envenomed) darts, missing their designed mark, strike into that very breast which he undertakes to defend. Whereas there are two things, principally, to be designed in a discourse of this subject, namely:—

1. The explaining the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so as that though they are some way three, they may yet be concluded to be in Godhead but one;

2. The evincing, notwithstanding that unity, the possibility of their sufficient distinction, to admit the distinct predicates that are severally spoken of them in the Holy Scriptures: the inquirer's discourse chiefly insists upon these two things:

1. That necessity of existence is the most fundamental attribute of Deity; and that therefore the Father, as the Fountain, being necessarily of himself,—the Son necessarily of the Father, the Holy Ghost necessarily from them both,—each cannot but be God, and the same one God: in reference to the *former* purpose.

2. That absolute omnimodous simplicity is never asserted in Scripture, of the Divine Being, nor capable of being, otherwise, demonstrated of it; and that it is impossible, either from Scripture or rational evidence, accurately to assign the limits thereof, and determine what simplicity belongs to that ever-blessed Being and what not. If it be necessary to our apprehending how such distinct *predicates* and *attributions* may severally belong to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that we conceive three distinct essences necessarily co-existing in an eternal, vital, inseparable union in the Divine Being; the thing may be in itself possible for aught we know. And this is propounded to serve the *latter* purpose.

The defender of the dean seems to think otherwise of these two things; namely, of necessity of existence, common

to the sacred three, which will prove each of them to be God; and, belonging to them in the mentioned order, as Father, Son, and Spirit, will prove them necessarily to be one God: and of what is said of simplicity, which might admit their sufficient distinction. Of both these, I say, he seems to think otherwise, by neglecting both, lest that discourse should be thought any way pertinent or useful to its end; and disputes vehemently against the latter. How strongly and successfully he does it, in respect of the truth of the thing, we have seen. But whether weakly or strongly, that his disputation tends to wound the dean's cause all that it can, shall now be made appear.

It is notorious the dean hath asserted so positively three infinite Minds or Spirits, that the benign interpretation wherewith this defender would salve the matter, (a new vocabulary being to be made for him on purpose, and the reason of things quite altered,) will to any man of sense seem rather ludicrous than sufficient, without express retractation: for which the inquirer thinks he is upon somewhat better terms than he, if there were occasion for it, both by the tenour of his whole discourse, and by what he hath particularly said.[1] But after the interpretation offered, see whether such things are not said over and over in the defence, as make the defender—and the dean if he speak his sense—most obnoxious to the whole argumentation in the postscript: so as, if a part was acted, it was carried so untowardly, that it seemed to be quite forgotten what part it was; and all the blows (for it was come now to offending instead of defending) fall directly upon him whom the actor had undertaken to defend.

It hath been noted already, that the defender says expressly,[2] 'the Divine nature is one individual nature,'—and so says the inquirer,[3]—but 'not one single nature;' (then it must be double and triple, not absolutely simple, as also the inquirer says;) to which he, namely the defender, adds,

[1] 'Calm Discourse,' etc., Sect. xxviii. [2] 'Defence,' pp. 16, 18.
[3] 'Calm Discourse,' etc., Sect. xix.

'one single nature can be but one person, whether in God or man.' Now let any man judge whether all his reasonings are not most directly applicable against him, (if they signify anything,) which are contained in his postscript.[1]

How furiously doth he exagitate that saying, 'When you predicate Godhead, or the name of God, of any one of them, namely, Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, you herein express a true but inadequate conception of God,' etc.[2] insisting that the whole 'undivided Divine nature' (no doubt it is everlastingly undivided wherever it is) 'subsists entirely in three distinct persons.' This the inquirer never denied, though he charges it upon him, that he makes no one of the persons to be true and perfect God.[3] But how well doth that agree with what he had himself said, 'though God be the most absolute, complete, independent Being, yet neither the Son, nor the Holy Ghost, can be said to be an absolute, complete, independent God.'[4] He falsely charges it upon the inquirer that he makes the persons severally not perfect God, and he denies two of them to be complete God. To say *not perfect* is criminal,—as indeed it is; to say *not complete* is innocent! But his saying the Son and Holy Ghost are not complete God,—how doth it consist with what is said, 'The same whole entire divinity distinctly and inseparably subsists in the person of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.'[5] What is wanting to make Him complete God, in whom 'the whole, entire divinity subsists?' No wonder if *he* quarrel with all the world who so little agrees with him whose defence he undertakes, or with himself. In the meantime the inquirer hath the less reason to complain, when he manifestly treats himself as ill as him.

I only add, that for his discourse concerning 'the one Divinity, or one Divine Nature, subsisting wholly and entirely, three times,' (whereas I had thought three persons had subsisted at all times, and all at once,) and the persons

[1] Pages 106—108, etc. [2] 'Postscript.' [3] *Ibid.*
[4] 'Defence,' p. 26. [5] 'Postscript,' p. 109.

of the Son and Holy Spirit not being emanations; not the Son, because he is the Father's image, and an image is not an emanation, but a reflection, (but how should there be a reflected image without an emanation?) 'nor the Holy Ghost, being προβολὴ, not in the sense of *emanation*, but of the *mysterious procession*;' I shall make no guesses about it, (for it concerns not the inquirer,) only I think it very secure against the formidable objection which he mentions of its being too intelligible.[1]

Upon the whole matter, I see not what service it can do him, to put 'intelligent person' instead of 'mind;' for I thought every person had been intelligent. Boethius' definition, which he alleges, plainly implies so much; and one would think he must know that it is the usual notion of a person to understand by it *suppositum rationale* or *intelligens*. Therefore methinks he should not reckon it necessary to distinguish persons (as he doth by this addition of intelligent) into such as are persons and such as are no persons.

But since he expressly says, and I think for the most part truly, 'that the three persons or subsistences, in the ever-blessed trinity, are three real, substantial subsistences, each of which hath entirely all the perfections of the divine nature, divine wisdom, power, and goodness; and therefore each of them is eternal infinite mind, as distinct from each other as any other three persons; and this he believes the dean will no more recant, than he will renounce a trinity; for all the wit of man cannot find a medium between a substantial trinity and a trinity of names, or a trinity of mere modes, respects, and relations in the same single essence, which is no trinity at all:'[2] as also he hath said much to the same purpose before, 'that to talk of three subsistences in the abstract, without three that subsist, or of one single nature which hath three subsistences, when it is impossible that in singularity there can be more than one subsistence,' etc. I believe he will find no small difficulty to name what it is,

[1] Page 35.

[2] 'Defence,' p. 30.

that with the peculiar distinct manner of subsistence makes a person ; not the very same common nature, for the persons cannot be distinguished from each other by that which is common to them all. Therefore the divine nature which is common to the three, must according to him comprehend three single natures, and not be absolutely simple. Hither must be his resort at last, after all his earnest disputation against it. And these he will have to be parts, which because they are undivided, impartible, inseparable, everlastingly and necessarily united, I do reckon the inquirer did, with very sufficient reason and with just decency, and doth still, continue very peremptorily to, deny.

And whereas he contends that the whole divine nature is entirely in each subsistence, (as he does again and again,) I think the term 'whole' improper, where there are no proper parts; and I doubt not, when he gives place to cooler thoughts, he will see cause to qualify that assertion. For if he strictly mean that everything that belongs to the Godhead is in each person; I see not how he will fetch himself from the Socinian consequence,—that then each person must have a trinity subsisting in it, and be Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. For I doubt not he will acknowledge that the entire divinity includes in it the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And therefore he must be beholden to an inadequate notion in this very case, when all is done, how much soever he hath contended against it. I do however think it safe and free from any other difficulty than we unavoidably have in conceiving infinites, to say, that all perfection is in each subsistent (which I like better than subsistence, as more expressive of the concrete) as far as their natural, necessary, eternal order towards one another,—as the first is the fountain or radix, the second from that, and the third from both,—can possibly admit. All must be originally in the Father; with whom the other two have that intimate, vital, eternal union, that what is in him the other communicate therein in as full perfection as is conceivable, and more than it is possible for us or for any finite mind to conceive. Therefore since that

difference which only proceeds from that natural, eternal order, is conjecturable only, but is really unknown, unrevealed, and inscrutable; it is better herein to confess the imperfection of that knowledge which we have, than to boast that which we have not, or aspire to that which we cannot have.

A VIEW

OF THAT PART OF

THE LATE CONSIDERATIONS

ADDRESSED TO H. H. ABOUT THE TRINITY,

WHICH CONCERNS

THE SOBER INQUIRY ON THAT SUBJECT:

IN A LETTER TO THE FORMER FRIEND.

You see, Sir, I make no haste to tell you my thoughts of what hath been published since my last to you, against my sentiments touching the Holy Trinity. I saw the matter less required my time and thoughts, than my other affairs; and so little, that I was almost indifferent whether I took any notice thereof or no. There is really nothing of argument in what I have seen, but what I had suggested before and objected to myself, in those very discourses of mine now animadverted on; which not having prevented, with me, the opinion I am of, can as little alter it, and should as little any man's else.

But a little leisure, as it can without extortion be gained from other occasions, I do not much grudge to bestow on this.

I find myself concerned in the late considerations on the explications of the doctrine of the trinity, in a letter to H. H.

The author is pleased to give me the honour of a name, a lank, unvocal one. It is so contrived, that one may easily guess whom he means; but the reason of his doing so, I

cannot guess; is it because he knew, himself, what he would have others believe?

But I suppose he as well knew his own name. If he knew not the former, he ran the hazard of injuring either the supposed author, or the true, or both. I could, I believe, make as shrewd a guess at his name and express it as plainly. But I think it not civil to do so, because I apprehend he hath some reason to conceal it, whereof I think he hath a right to be the judge. But I will not prescribe to him rules of civility, of which that he is a great judge, I will not allow myself to doubt.

Yet I will not suppose him to have so very diminishing thoughts of our Saviour, as not to acknowledge and reverence the authority of that great rule of his, which he knows gained reverence with some who called not themselves Christians, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you," etc.: nor can divine what greater reason he should have to hide his own name than to expose mine, or make the person he indigitates be thought the author of the discourse he intended to expose; since no man can imagine how, as the Christian world is constituted, any one can be more obnoxious for denying three persons than for asserting three Gods: which latter his impotent attempt aims to make that author do.

For his censures of that author's style, and difficulty to be understood, they offend me not. But so I have known some pretend deafness, to what they were unwilling to hear. There is indeed one place, 'Sober Inquiry,' in the end of Sect. VIII.,—where *must* should have been left out, upon the adding afterwards of *can*,—that might give one some trouble:[1] in which yet, the supposal of a not unusual *asyndeton*, would, without the help of magic, have relieved a considering reader.

And for his compliments, as they do me no real good, so, I thank God, they hurt me not. I dwell at home, and better know my own furniture than another can.

For himself, I discern and readily acknowledge in him those excellent accomplishments for which I most heartily wish him an advocate in a better cause; without despair he

[1] Corrected in the present Edition.—Ed.

will yet prove so, when I take notice of some passages which look like indications of a serious temper of mind,—as 'of choosing God and the honour of his name for our portion and design:' and that '*he* lives in vain, who knows not his Maker, and his God:' with the like.

But on the other hand, I was as heartily sorry to meet with an expression of so different a strain, on so awful a subject;—of 'making a coat for the moon.'

That precept which Josephus[1] inserts among those given the Jews, doth for the reason it hath in it, abstracting from its authority, deserve to be considered. It seems to import a decency to the rest of mankind, whose notions of a Deity did not argue them sunk into the lowest degrees of sottishness and stupidity. Good sir, what needed, think you, so adventurous boldness in so lubricous a case? It gains nothing to a man's cause either of strength or reputation with wise and good men. A sound argument will be as sound without it. Nor should I much value having *them* on my side, whom I can hope to make laugh at so hazardous a jest. I can never indeed have any great veneration for a morose sourness, whatsoever affected appearance it may have with it of a simulated sanctimony or religiousness; but I should think it no hardship upon me to repress that levity as to attempt dancing upon the brink of so tremendous a precipice; and would always express myself with suspicion, and a supposed possibility of being mistaken, in a case wherein I find many of noted judgment and integrity, in the succession of several ages, differing from me. But go we on to the cause itself, where he pretends: 1. To give a view of the sober inquirer's hypothesis; 2. And then to argue against it. As to the former. He doth it, I am loath to say, with less fairness than from a person of his otherwise appearing ingenuity, one would expect. For he really makes me to have said more than I ever did, in divers instances; and much less than I have expressly said, and that he cannot have so little understanding as not to know was most material to the cause in hand.

[1] Βλασφημείτω δὲ μηδεὶς θεοὺς οὓς πόλεις ἄλλαι νομίζουσι. Lib. iv. Jud. Antiq.

He represents me saying: The persons are 'distinct essences, numerical natures, beings, substances;' and, 'That I hold them to be three spirits;'[1] when in the close of one of those paragraphs, I recite the words of W. J.: 'In the unity of the Godhead there must be no plurality or multiplicity of substances allowed;' and do add, 'Nor do I say that there must.'[2] And, 'I do not positively say there are three distinct substances, minds, or spirits.'[3] I would ask this, my learned antagonist, Have *saying* and *not saying* the same signification? And again, when my words are: 'I will not use the expressions, as signifying my formed judgment, that there are three things, substances, or spirits in the Godhead,'[4] how could he say I hold the three persons to be three spirits? Is any man, according to the ordinary way of speaking, said to hold what is not his formed judgment? If he only propose things whereof he doubts, to be considered and discussed by others, in order to the forming of it, and by gentle ventilation to sift out truth, it the rather argues him *not* to hold this or that.

And I think much service might be done to the common interest of religion by such a free mutual communication of even more doubtful thoughts, if such disquisitions were pursued with more candour, and with less confidence and prepossession of mind or addictedness to the interest of any party whatsoever. If it were rather endeavoured to reason one another into, or out of, this or that opinion, than either by sophistical collusions to cheat, or to hector by great words, one that is not of my mind: or if the design were less to expose an adversary than to clear the matter in controversy.

Besides, that if such equanimity did more generally appear and govern in transactions of this nature, it would produce a greater liberty in communicating our thoughts about some of the more vogued and fashionable opinions, by exempting each other from the fear of ill-treatment in the most sensible kind: it being too manifest, that the same confident insulting genius which makes a man think himself competent to be a

[1] Page 40, col. 1, col. 2.
[2] 'Calm Discourse,' p. 129.
[3] *Ibid.* Sect. xiv.
[4] *Ibid.* Page 133.

standard to mankind, would also make him impatient of dissent, and tempt him to do worse than reproach one that differs from him, if it were in his power. And the club or fagot arguments must be expected to take place, where what he thinks rational ones did not do the business. This only on the by.

In the meantime, that there is a trinity in the Godhead is no matter of doubt with me; but only whether this be the best way of explaining and defending it. If this be not the best or sufficient, some other will, I believe, or hath been found out by some other: of which I have spoken my sense not only indefinitely, but particularly of the more common way; not that I did then or have yet thought it the best; but not indefensible.[1]

And I must now sincerely profess that the perusal of these very considerations gives me more confidence about this hypothesis than I allowed myself before; finding that the very sagacious author of them,—of whose abilities and industry together I really have that opinion as to count him the most likely to confute it of all the modern antitrinitarians,—hath no other way to deal with it, than first, both partially and invidiously to represent it, and then, rather to trifle than argue against it. He first paints it out in false and ugly colours, before he comes to reasoning; and then, when he should reason, he says nothing that hath so much as a colour. It seems to me an argument of a suspected ill cause on his side, that he thought it needful to prepossess the reader with the imagination of I know not (and I believe he knows not) what gross ideas,—as he romances,—belonging to this hypothesis; because from those words, "Then was I by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight,"[2] the author speaks of the delicious society, which these words intimate, the eternal Wisdom, and the prime Author and Parent of all things, to have, each with other.

For my part, I have little doubt but this ingenious writer

[1] 'Calm Discourse,' pp. 113, 114, and Sect. xxviii. [2] Prov. viii. 30.

is so well acquainted with the gust and relish of intellectual delight, that he chose to expose his adversary by using that odd expression of *gross ideas* so causelessly, in accommodation only to the genius of some other men whom he thought fit to humour, rather than his own. Nor can he be so little acquainted with the paganish theology, as not to apprehend a vast disagreement between this and that; and a much greater agreement between the paganish notion of the Deity, and his own.

For the questions which he supposes me to put, and makes me answer as he thinks fit, by misapplied passages of that discourse, I hope it will appear they were either prevented, or answered at another rate.

At length he says, 'The butt-end of this hypothesis,' etc. —I like not that phrase the worse for the author's sake, of whom it seems borrowed, whose memory greater things will make live, when we are forgot: but let him proceed—'The butt-end of this hypothesis is the true strength of it.' But that true strength he hath either had the hap not to observe, or taken the care not to represent; that is, from what is so often inculcated in that discourse,—the necessary existence of two *hypostases* of and in the first, and of an omnimodous simplicity groundlessly supposed in the Divine Being,—he hath kept himself at a wary, cautious distance, when he might apprehend *there* was its strength. Therefore I cannot also but observe that as he hath marked this hypothesis with most undue ill characters, so he hath maimed it too of what was most considerable belonging to it; that he might expose it by the former means so as to make it need much defence, and that by the latter it might seem quite destitute of any defence at all.

And now when—not without some untoward disfigurations—it hath thus far escaped his hands, and is, in none of the best shapes, set up only to be beaten down; the argument he first attacks it with, is the inartificial one of authority. And yet his argument from this topic is only negative,—that the opinion he would confute wants authority; 'that the

inquirer was the first that ever dreamt of it, and that no learned divine of any persuasion will subscribe to it:' as much as to say, It is false, and impossible to be true. The inquirer only proposing what he offered, as possible for aught we know, is not otherwise opposed than by asserting it to be impossible. This therefore he must say, or he saith nothing to the purpose. And why now is it impossible? Because nobody said it before. So, then, was everything that any man *first* said; but afterwards, by being often spoken, it might, it seems, at length become true!

For any learned divines subscribing to it, I suppose he intends that in the *strict* sense. And so the inquirer never said he would subscribe it himself, otherwise than that his judgment did more incline to it as liable to less exception than other ways of defending the doctrine of the trinity; or than denying it, which he thought least defensible of all.

But now supposing one should find learned divines of the same mind (and perhaps some may be found more confident than he) I would ask the considerator, whether he will therefore confess a trinity a possible thing? If not, he deals not fairly, to put the inquirer upon quoting authorities to no purpose; or that he would have them conclude him, by whom he will not be concluded himself.

He seems indeed himself to have forgot the question,—with which afterwards he charges the inquirer,—as it is set down: Whether a trinity in the Godhead be a possible thing? This was the question, not what John, or Thomas, or James such-a-one thought? But while he pretends to think nobody else is of the inquirer's mind in the particular point he is now speaking to; that is, the delicious society the divine *hypostases* are supposed to have with each other; give me leave freely to discourse this matter. I would fain know what it is, wherein he supposes the inquirer to have overshot his mark; or of what makes he here so mighty a wonderment? It can be but one of these two things:—either that there are three Divine persons in the Godhead really distinct; or,—that they have (if there be) a delicious society or conversation with each

other. Will he say the former is a singular opinion? or, that it is novel? Was there never a real trinitarian in the world before? Doth he not, in his own express words, sort the inquirer with one whom he will not deny to be a learned divine, p. 43 of these present Considerations?[1] 'The author of the twenty-eight propositions, and Mr. H—w,' as he calls the inquirer, 'are honest men, and real trinitarians:' by which former character he hath, I dare say, ten thousand times more gratified his ambition than by calling him learned too. And I believe he will as little think this a novel opinion, as a singular one.

Nor shall I thank him for acknowledging it to have been the opinion of the fathers, generally; not only *Ante-Nicene*, and *Nicene*, but *Post-Nicene* too, for some following ages, unto that of P. Lombard; so obvious it is to every one that will but more slightly search.

For my part, I will not except Justin Martyr himself,—whom I the rather mention, both as he was one of the more ancient of the fathers, and, as I may also call him, the father of the modalists,—nor his notion even about the Homo-ousian Trinity,[2] as he expressly styles it. For though it will require more time than I now intend to bestow, to give a distinct account of every passage throughout that discourse of his, yet his expression of the τρόποι ὑπάρξεως must not be so taken, as if it were to be torn away from its coherence, and from itself. When therefore he says the τὸ μὲν ἀγέννητον, καὶ γεννητὸν, καὶ ἐκπορευτόν, *the being unbegotten, begotten, and having proceeded*, are not names of the essence, but (τρόποι ὑπάρξεως) *modes of subsistence;* he must mean they are not immediately names of the essence, but mediately they cannot but be so. For what do they modify? not nothing. When they are said to be modes of subsistence, what is it that subsists? We cannot pluck away these modes of subsistence from that which subsists, and whereof they are the modes. And what is that? You will say the μία οὐσία, the *one essence*, which he had mentioned before; and that one essence

[1] Col. 1. [2] Εκθ. πιστ.—Just. Mar. opera. fol. Ed. Colon. 1686, pp. 373-4.

is, it is true, as perfectly one as it is possible for 'what is of itself,' and 'what are from that,' to be with each other; that is, that they are congenerous, as the sun and its rays, (according to that,[1] ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης, *the effulgency of glory*;) or as mind, and,—where there is nothing else but substance,—consubstantial thought or word. Therefore this oneness of essence must be taken in so large and extensive a sense as that it may admit of these differences. For so he afterwards plainly speaks; if 'ὁ μὲν, ἀγεννήτως ἔχει, *if the one* (the Father) hath his existence without being begotten; ὁ δὲ, γεννητῶς, *another* (the Son) by being begotten; τὸ δὲ, ἐκπορευτῶς, but *that* (the Holy Ghost) by having proceeded; here it befalls us to behold differences, (τὰ τῆς διαφορᾶς), or the things that import difference.' There must be a sense, therefore, wherein he understood this essence to be most truly one; and a sense wherein he also understood it to have its differences, and those too not unimportant ones, as *being unbegotten* and *being begotten* signify no light differences.

And in what latitude of sense he understood the oneness of essence whereof he had before spoken, may be seen in his following explication, when what he said he would have be σαφέστερον, *more manifest*; he makes Adam's peculiar mode of subsistence to be that he was οὐ γεννητὸς, ἀλλὰ διαπλασθείς, *not begotten*, but *made* by God's own hand; but *for them that were from him*,—he intimates *theirs* to be that they were *begotten*, not *made*. If then you inquire concerning the same essence that was common to him and them, you still find that man is the ὑποκείμενον, *the subject*, whether of formation, as to him, or of generation, as to them. And who apprehends not in what latitude of sense the human nature is one, which is common to Adam and his posterity? Though the Divine nature is incomparably more one, which is common to the Father, Son, and Spirit; as we have formerly insisted, and shall further show it cannot but be, in all necessary and continually depending emanations.

Yet I might, if there were need, again, as to this part,

[1] Heb. i. 3.

quote the considerator to himself. For I suppose he will not disown the considerations in 1693, in which are these words:[1] 'Dr. Cudworth, by a great number of very pertinent and home quotations, hath proved that his explication (I mean that part of it which makes the three persons to be so many distinct essences or substances) is the doctrine of the principal, if not of all the fathers, as well as of the Platonists.' And it is added, 'And I, for my part, do grant it.' Upon the whole, then, I reckon that as to this first part, we stand clear not only to the rest of the world, but with this author himself,—that to be a real trinitarian is not so unheard of a thing, or what no learned divine of any persuasion ever dreamt of before the inquirer. But now for the

Second part: The delicious society supposed to be between, or rather among, the three persons. Is this a dream? and so strange a one? Why, good sir! can you suppose three persons, that is, three intellectual subsistences, perfectly wise, holy, and good, co-existing with, in-existing in, one another, to have no society? or that society not to be delicious? He says, how can it be? I say, how can it but be? Herein I am sure the inquirer hath far more company than in the former. For whether the three persons have all the same numerical essence or three distinct, all agree they most delightfully converse. Will he pretend never to have read any that make Love (as it were intercurrent between *the two first*) the character of *the third?* In short, is it the thing he quarrels with as singular, or the word? At the thing,—supposing three persons,—he can have no quarrel, without quarrelling with the common sense of mankind. For the word, he hath more wit and knowledge of language than to pretend to find fault with that. For let him but consult expositors, even the known critics, upon the mentioned place,[2] (whom, in so plain a case, I will not be at the pains to quote and transcribe,) and take notice whether none read those words *fui in deliciis*. Therefore I believe the considerator will be so ingenuous, as to perceive he hath, in this part of

[1] Page 15, col. 1.

[2] Prov. viii. 30.

his discourse, grossly overshot, or undershot, or shot wide of, his own mark, if indeed he had any, or did not (letting his bolt fly too soon) shoot at rovers, before he had taken steady aim at anything. In short, all this dust could be raised but with design only,—because he could not enlighten his readers,—to blind them.

But now, when he should come by solid argument to disprove the hypothesis, by showing that three individual Divine natures or essences can possibly have no *nexus*, so as to become one entire Divine nature, and, at the same time, (which this hypothesis supposes,) remain still three individual Divine natures and essences, he thinks fit to leave it to another to do it for him, who, he says, 'if he cannot prove this, can prove nothing.' And when we see that proof, it will be time enough to consider it.

In the meantime I cannot here but note what I will neither, in charity, call forgery in the considerator, nor, in civility, ignorance,—but it cannot be less than great oversight, —his talk of *these three*, so united as to *become one*. The inquirer never spake (nor dreamt) of their *becoming one*, but of their being naturally, necessarily, and eternally so.

Then he comes to put the question, as he says it is between the inquirer and the Socinians. And he puts it thus: 'How three distinct, several, individual Divine beings, essences, or substances, should remain three several individual substances, and yet, at the same time, be united into *one* Divine substance called God?' One would have thought, when he had so newly waived the former question as wherein he meant *not* to be concerned, he should presently have put a new one upon which he intended to engage himself. But we have the same over again, even with the same ill look of an equivalent phrase unto *becoming united into one*, to insinuate to his reader, as if his antagonist thought these three were *de novo* united, not *in* but *into* one: which he knew must have a harsh sound, and as well knew it to be most repugnant to the inquirer's most declared sentiment. Nor will it be any presumption if I take the liberty to set down the

question according to the inquirer's mind, who hath as much reason to know it as he; and I am sure it will be more agreeable to the tenour of his discourse now referred to; 'Whether the τὸ θεῖον, or the Divine Being, may not possibly, for aught we know, contain three natures, or essences, under the names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so far distinct as is necessary to found the distinct predications or attributes severally given them in the Holy Scriptures, and yet be eternally, necessarily, naturally, vitally so united as, notwithstanding that remaining distinction, to be one God.' And let us now see what he hath to say, *first*, to the inquirer's illustrations of it, as possible: *secondly*, what he brings to prove it impossible.

1. As to the former part, he first falls upon what the inquirer hath said concerning the vegetative, sensitive, and intellective natures in ourselves. And upon this he insists so operosely, as if the whole weight of the cause had been laid upon it; and seems to think the inquirer had forgot the question when he mentioned it; because he says, those are only distinct faculties, not persons or substances, (though persons were not in his question,) without ever taking any notice of the inquirer's waiving it, with these words: 'that he would content himself with what was more obvious.' But this is all art; to raise a mighty *posse*, and labour to seem to those that he believed would read what he writ only, not what the other did, most effectually to expugn what he saw was neglected, though not altogether useless; as we shall see anon.

In the meantime, it is observable how needlessly he slurs himself in this his first brisk onset. He says, 'No man ever pretended—that the vegetative, sensitive, and intellective faculties (or powers) are so many distinct, individual persons, substances, or essences, we grant,' etc.

What! did no man ever pretend that these three distinct natures, the vegetative, sensitive, intellective, were in man three distinct substances or souls, concurring by a certain subordination in him? What necessity was there, that to heighten his triumph, in the opinion of his credulous fol-

lowers, he should, with so glorious a confidence, put on the vain and false show of having all the world on his side; and herein either dissemble his knowledge, or grossly betray his ignorance in the mere history of philosophy, and most imprudently suppose all his readers as ignorant as he would seem? What! did he never hear of an Averroes in the world? Doth he not know that physician and philosopher, and his followers, earnestly contended for what he says no man ever pretended to? Or that divers other commentators upon Aristotle, have some abetted, others as vehemently opposed, them in it? Not to insist also that some thought the *Intellectus Agens* and *Patiens*, to be distinct substances, belonging to the nature of man, as others had also other conceits about the former? And if he look some hundreds of years back, as far as the time and extant work of Nemesius,—bishop and philosopher, as he writes himself,—of the 'Nature of Man,' (who lived in the time of Gregory Nazianzen, as appears by an epistle of his writ to him, and prefixed to that little book of his,) he will find that author takes notice there were divers that took man to consist of mind, soul, and body; and that some did doubt 'whether the mind supervening to the soul as one to the other, did not make the latter intelligent.'[1] And in several other parts of that work, easy, if it were necessary, to be recited, he speaks it as the judgment of some, 'that the unreasonable nature in man did exist by itself, as being of itself an unreasonable soul, not a part of the reasonable;[2] accounting it one of the greatest absurdities, that the unreasonable soul should be a part of that which is reasonable.'[3]

And he carries us yet much further back, referring us to Plotinus,[4] in whom any that will, may read much more to that purpose in many places. It matters not whether this opinion be true or false; but a great mistake (or misrepresentation) it was, to say no man ever pretended to it. And

[1] Πότερον προσελθὼν ὁ νοῦς τῇ ψυχῇ, ὡς ἄλλος ἄλλῃ, νοερὰν αὐτὴν ἐποίησεν, etc., cap. 1.

[2] Καθ' ἑαυτὴν εἶναι ὡς λόγον ψυχήν.

[3] Τῶν ἀτοποτάτων, cap. 16.

[4] Enn. vi. lib. 7, cap. 5, 6, 7, etc.

be that as it will; if all the readers will suspend their judgments that a trinity in the Godhead is impossible, till the considerator shall have proved, by plain demonstration, the concurrence of three such spirits (a vegetative, sensitive, and intellective) vitally united in the constitution of man, is a thing simply impossible, I believe he will not, in haste, have many proselytes.

I, for my part, as his own eyes might have told him, laid no stress upon it; but only mentioned it *in transitu*, as I was going on to what is obvious and in view to every man,—the union between our soul and body. Nor was I solicitous to find this an exact parallel, as he fancies I was obliged to do. What if there be no exact parallel? Will any man of a sober mind, or that is master of his own thoughts, conclude everything impossible in the uncreated Being, whereof there is not an exact parallel in the creation? If any man will stand upon this,—come, make an argument of it; let us see it in form, and try its strength: Whatsoever hath not its exact parallel in the creation, is impossible in God, etc.—He will sooner prove himself ridiculous, than prove his point by such a medium.

It is enough for a sober man's purpose, in such a case as we are now considering, if we find such things actually are (or might as easily be as what we see actually is) among the creatures, that are of as difficult conception and explication as what appears represented in the inquirer's hypothesis concerning a trinity. It is trifling to attempt to give or to ask a parallel exact *per omnia*. It abundantly serves any reasonable purpose, if there be a parallel *quoad hoc;* namely, in respect of the facility or difficulty of conception. And though the vegetative, sensitive, and intellective natures be not so many distinct substances, a trinity is not less conceivable in the Divine Being, than three such natures or natural powers in the one human nature.

And whoever they be that will not simplify the Divine Being into nothing, (as the excellent author of the twenty-eight 'Propositions' speaks,) must also acknowledge the mos

real perfections in the Divine Being; though not univocal, but infinitely transcendent to anything in us. And are they no way distinct? Let any sober understanding judge. Will the same notion agree to them all? Is his knowledge, throughout, the same with his effective power? Then he must make himself. For who can doubt he knows himself? And is his will the self-same undistinguishable perfection, in him, with his knowledge? Then the purposes of his will must be to effect all that he can. For doth he not know all that he can do? And the complacencies of his will must be as much in what is evil as good, even in the most odious turpitude of the vilest and most immoral evils! For he knows both alike. I know what is commonly said of extrinsical denominations: but are such denominations true or false? Have they anything *in re* correspondent to them, or have they not? Then some distinction there must be of these perfections themselves. If so, how are they distinguished?

And there appears great reason, from God's own word, to conceive greater distinction of the three *hypostases* in his being, than of the attributes which are common to them; as is said, 'Sober Inquiry,' pp. 140, 141; in reference whereto, it is not improper or impertinent to mention such differences, as we find in our own being, though they be not distinct substances. Less distinction in ourselves may lead us to conceive the possibility of greater in Him, in whom we are wont to apprehend nothing but substance.

What he adds concerning the union of soul and body in ourselves,—which he cannot deny to be distinct substances,—is, from a man of so good sense, so surprisingly strange and remote from the purpose, that one would scarce think it from the same man; but that he left this part to some other of the club, and afterwards wrote on, himself, without reading it over; or this was with him (what we are all liable to) some drowsy interval.

For when he had himself recited as the inquirer's words or sense, 'If there be this union between two so contrary natures and substances, as the soul and body, why may there not be

a like union between two or three created spirits?' he, without shadow of a pretence, feigns the inquirer again to have forgot the question, because soul and body are not both intelligent substances. And why, sir, doth this argue him to have forgot the question? It is as if he expected a man to be at the top of the stairs, as soon as he touched the first step. In a series of discourse, must the beginning touch the end, leaving out what is to come between, and connect both parts? What then serve mediums for? And so farewell to all reasonings, since nothing can be proved by itself. He expected, it seems, I should have proved 'three intelligent natures might be united, because three intelligent natures might be united.'

But say I, and so he repeats, 'if there be so near union between things of so contrary natures as soul and body, why not between two or three created spirits?' The question is,—as he *now* states it himself,—why may not three intelligent substances be united? And hither he (with palpable violence) immediately refers the mention of the union of soul and body; and, says he, 'Why, sir, are body and soul intelligent substances?' And, say I, But why, sir, are not the three (supposed) created spirits intelligent substances? And now, thinks he, will my easy admiring readers, that read me only and not him, say, 'What a baffle hath he given the inquirer! What an ignorant man is this Mr. ——, to talk of soul and body, as both intelligent substances!' But if any of them happen upon the inquirer's book too, then must they say, 'How scurvily doth this matter turn upon himself! how inconsiderate a prevaricator was he that took upon him the present part of a considerer, so to represent him!' And I myself would say, had I the opportunity of free discourse with him in a corner, (which because I have not, I say it here,) 'Sir, is this sincere writing? Is this the way to sift out truth?' And I must further say, this looks like a man stung by the pungency of the present question: 'If soul and body, things of so contrary natures, that is, of an intelligent and unintelligent nature, can be united into one

(human) nature, why may not three created spirits, all intelligent natures, be as well united into some one thing?' It appears you knew not what to say to it, and would fain seem to say something, when you really had nothing to say; and therefore so egregiously tergiversate, and feign yourself not to understand it, or that your antagonist did not understand himself. The inquirer's scope was manifest. Nothing was to be got by so grossly perverting it. Is there no argument but *à pari?* Might you not plainly see, he here argued *à fortiori?* If contrary natures might be so united, why not, much rather, *like* natures?

When you ask me this question, 'Do not body and soul remain two substances, a bodily and a spiritual, notwithstanding their concurrence to the constitution of a man?' I answer, Yes. And I thank you, sir, for this kind look towards my hypothesis. If they were not so, the mention of this union had no way served it. You know it is only union, with continuing distinction, that is for my purpose. I doubt you nodded a little, when you asked me that question; and I do *annuere.*

But when the discourse was only of a *natural* union, what, in the name of wonder, made you dream of a Christmas-pie? Had you writ it at the same time of year I am now writing, I should have wondered less. But either you had some particular, preternatural appetite to that sort of delicate; or you gave your fancy a random liberty, to make your pen write whatever came to your finger's end; and that whirled you unaware into a pastry, and so, by mere chance, you came to have your 'finger in the pie.' Or you thought to try whether this wild ramble might not issue as luckily for you, as Dr. Echard's jargon of words fortuitously put together, (to ridicule Hobbes's fatal chain of thoughts,) at length ending in a *napkin;*—which was mightily for your turn, in your present case.

But upon the whole matter, when you let your mind so unwarily be *in patinis,* your cookery quite spoiled your philosophy: otherwise, when you had newly read those

words in the 'Sober Inquiry,'[1] as I find you had, 'Waiving the many artificial unions of distinct things, that united, and continuing distinct, make one thing under one name, I shall only consider what is natural,' you would never let it (your mind I mean, so fine a thing) be huddled up, and sopped, with meat, plums, sugar, wine, in a Christmas-pie; or have thought that the union of a human soul with a human body was like such a jumble as this. I believe when some among the ancients made use of this union of soul and body,—as I find they have, to represent a very sacred, namely, the hypostatical one,—they little thought it would be so debased; or that anything would be said of it so extravagant as this. And, if we design doing anybody good by writing, let us give over this way of talk; lest people think, what I remember Cicero once said of the Epicureans' arguing, that they do not so much consider as *sortiri*, 'cast lots,' what to say. But now it is like we may come to some closer discourse. We see what is said to the inquirer's elucidation of his hypothesis to represent it possible; which by mere oversight and incogitance (as I hope now appears) was too hastily pronounced an oversight or incogitancy.

2. We are next to consider what he says to prove it impossible. And so far as I can apprehend the drift of the discourse, what he alleges will be reduced to these two heads of arguments: namely—that three such hypostases (or subsistents, as I have chosen to call them) can have no possible nexus, by which to be one God: (1.) Because they are all supposed intelligent: (2.) Because they can neither be said to be finite nor infinite. He should not therefore have said the hypothesis was mere incogitance and oversight; for he knows I saw, and considered them both, in the 'Sober Inquiry' itself: the former, Sect. vi., the latter, Sects. xxv., xxvi., with Letter I.; and thought them unconcluding then, as I still think. Nor do I find the considerer hath now added any strength to either of them. But I shall, since he is importune, go to the reconsideration of them with him. And,

[1] Sect. v.

i. As to the former, I cannot so much as imagine what should make him,—confessing, (which he could not help,) the actual union of an intelligent and unintelligent being,—deny the possible union of intelligent beings. He seems to apprehend many dangerous things in it; that if he cannot reason he may fright a man out of it, and out of his wits too! It will infer associating, discoursing, solacing. But where lies the danger of all this? or to whom is it dangerous? He says it introduces three omniscient, almighty Beings, as *I* expressly call them, associating, etc. But he cites no place where, and I challenge him to name any persons among whom, I so expressly called them. He may indeed tell where I blamed him for representing some of his adversaries as affirming three Almighties, and denying more than one; but that is not expressly calling them so myself. And he may know in time it is one thing expressly to call them so, and another to put him, as he is concerned, to disprove it.

Ay, but it will further infer tritheism: it will make three Gods; and if this be not to make three Gods, 'it can never be made appear that the pagans held more gods.'—Yes, if there be no natural, vital *nexus;* if they be not united *in one,* of which the pagans never talked: or, if they be co-ordinate, not subordinate, as Dr. Cudworth speaks. And I add, if that subordination be, not arbitrary, but by necessary, natural, continual emanation of the second from the first, and of the third from both the other; so as that their "goings forth may be truly from everlasting," as is said of the one, and may as well be conceived of another of them.

I would have the trinitarians be content with the reproach of falling in, *quoad hoc,* with Plato; and not envy their antagonists the honour of more closely following Mahomet. And, sir, there is more paganism in denying this, and the Divine revelation upon which it is grounded, than in supposing it.

No; but there can be no such *nexus.* 'Conversation, consociation, mutual harmony, agreement, and delectation—cannot be conceived but between beings so distinct and

diverse, that they can be one in no natural respect, but only in a civil or economical.' This is loud and earnest. But why can there not? Setting aside noise and clamour, I want to know a reason, why intelligent beings may not be as intimately and naturally united with one another as unintelligent and intelligent? and if so, why such union should spoil mutual conversation and delight? Perhaps his mind and mine might not do well together; for he cannot conceive, and I, for my part, cannot but conceive, that most perfect intelligent natures, vitally united, must have the most delightful conversation, harmony, and agreement together; and so much the more, by how much the more perfect they are, and by how much more perfect their union is.

Whereas then I expect a reason, why intelligent beings cannot be capable of natural union, and no other is given me, but because they are intelligent; and again, why such beings naturally united cannot converse, and no other is given me, but because they are naturally united,—that is, such things cannot be, because they cannot be; by how much the less such reasons have to convince, they have the more to confirm me, that the hypothesis I have proposed is not capable of being disproved. And for my increased confidence I must profess myself so far beholden to the considerator.

This, in the meantime, I do here declare, that I see not so much as the shadow of a reason from him, why three spiritual or intelligent beings cannot be naturally and vitally united with each other, with continuing distinction, so as to be really and truly one thing. If they cannot, I would know why? that is, why they cannot as well, or much rather than the soul and body, so as to be one entire man. If they can, such a created union is acknowledged possible; which is all that part of our discourse contends for. And it is enough for our present purpose; for this will be a union of *ὁμοούσια*, that is, of things of the same nature; the soul and body are *ἑτερούσια*, that is, things of very different natures.

And it sufficiently prepared our way, as was intended, to advance further, and add,

That if such a created or made union be possible, it cannot be understood why a like uncreated or unmade union should be thought impossible.

And if it be possible, the noisy clamour that a trinity in the Godhead is impossible, or that it will infer tritheism, must cease, and be hushed into everlasting silence; or if it shall still be resolved to be kept up,—to carry on the begun humour,—can only serve to fright children or unthinking people; but can never be made articulate enough to have any signification with men of sense.

For when the Father is acknowledged on all hands to be the original, or fountain-being, existing necessarily and eternally of himself; the Son existing by eternal promanation necessarily of, and from, and in the Father; the Holy Ghost of and in them both; these, because they all exist necessarily, cannot but be each of them God, and, because they exist in necessary, natural, eternal union, cannot but be one God.

And he that shall attempt to make tritheism of this, will sooner prove himself not a third part of a wise man, than from hence prove three Gods. We may truly and fitly say, the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God; but that form of speech, the Father is a God, the Son is a God, the Holy Ghost is a God, I think unjustifiable. The former way of speaking well agrees with the *homo-ousiotes* of the Deity, the substance whereof is congenerous. You may fitly say of three drops of the same water, they are each of them water. But if you should say they are each of them *a* water, one would understand you to mean they were all drops of so many different sorts of water. I do upon the whole judge the substance or essence of the three *hypostases* to be as perfectly *one*, as can possibly consist with the emanation of some from other of them. But now next,

ii. In his way to his second topic of argumentation, he is guilty of a strange sort of omission; that is, he twice over

says he will omit, what he greatly insists upon as a mighty matter,—that this (meaning the inquirer's hypothesis) is heresy among those of his own party, whether they be the nominal or the real trinitarians; who all agree, that each of the Divine persons is perfect God, in the most adequate and perfect sense; and this too, as such person is considered sejunctly, or, as the Athanasian creed speaks, by himself, etc.

To this I only say in the first place, that if this weigh anything, it ought in reason to be as heavy upon him as me; for I believe the same people that will call this account of the trinity heresy, will call his denial of it heresy much more. But if he be not concerned at that, I am the more obliged to him that he hath a kinder concern for me than himself. And if he really have, let it ease his mind to know, that let the opinion be heresy never so much, I, for my part, am however resolved to be no heretic; as he and they may well enough see, by the whole tenour of that discourse.

But yet I humbly crave leave to differ from him in this as well as in greater matters. I am apt enough indeed to think that the *nominal* trinitarians will judge the opinion of the *real* trinitarians to want truth; and the *real* will, perhaps more truly, judge *theirs* to want sense. But neither the one nor the other will say that each of the Divine persons is perfect God, in the most adequate and perfect sense. For both cannot but agree that God, in the most adequate and perfect sense, includes Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; but they will none of them say that each, or any, of the persons is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And I am very confident he that shall so represent them, will betray them by it into such inconveniences, and so much against their mind and intent, that if ever they did trust him,—as I believe they never did this considerator,—to express their sense for them, they never will do it more. As for Athanasius himself,—whose creed he mentions,—though he often speaks of an equality of the persons in point of Godhead;[1]

[1] Tom. ii. p. 576.

yet he most expressly excepts the differences (which I take to be very important) of being unbegotten, begotten, and proceeding; and,—which is a difference with a witness,—in his Questions and Answers, he asks, 'How many causes are there in God?'[1] and answers, 'One only, and that is the Father.' And then asks,[2] 'How many effects, or things caused?' And answers, 'Two, the Son and the Spirit:' and adds, 'The Father is called a cause, because he begets the Son, and sends out the Spirit; the Son and Spirit are said to be caused, because the Son is begotten, and doth not beget; the Spirit is sent forth, and doth not send.' Now can he be thought all this while to mean an absolute equality? And whereas he uses the term μοναδικῶς,—which our author renders *sejunctly*, or *by himself*, that he may make it seem opposite to what is said by the inquirer,[3]—I, for my part, say, as Athanasius doth, that each of these persons is, μοναδικῶς, singly God and Lord; but I say not, as he doth not,—and he denies what the 'Sober Inquiry' denies, in the mentioned place,—'that any one of the persons sejunctly, is all that is signified by the name of God;' which words this author slily leaves out, for what purpose he best knows. But his purpose, be it what it will, can no longer be served by it, than till the reader shall take the pains to cast back his eye upon the 'Sober Inquiry.'[4] And I must here put the considerator in mind of what I will not suppose him ignorant, but inadvertent only, at this time;—that one may be sejoined or abstracted from another two ways, or by a twofold abstraction, *precisive* or *negative*: that we may truly say of the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, that the one of them is or is not God, abstracting from both the other, according as you differently abstract. If you abstract any one of the persons from both the other by precisive abstraction, each of them is God or Lord, μοναδικῶς, or singly considered; but if by negative abstraction you sever any one from the other, so as to say the one is God, and not the other, or any one is all that is signified by the name of God, I deny it, as

[1] Q. 11, πόσα αἴτια. [2] Q. 12, πόσα αἰτιατὰ. [3] Sect. xix. [4] *Ibid.*

before I did; for so you would exclude the other two the Godhead; which is but what was expressly enough said, 'Sober Inquiry:'[1] 'The Father is God, but not excluding the Son and the Holy Ghost; the Son is God, but not excluding—etc.'

And if, as this author quotes, 'we are compelled by the Christian verity so to speak,' I wonder it should not compel *him*,—as it is Christian verity, or at least as it is verity,—as well as the rest of Christians, or mankind. Why hath he only the privilege of exemption from being compelled by truth? Athanasius's word is *ἀναγκαζόμεθα, we are necessitated;* and if the considerator's own translation grieve him, he might relieve himself by considering that all necessity is not compulsive. And because he hath brought me to Athanasius, I shall take the occasion to say I cannot apprehend him to have any sentiment contrary to this hypothesis. His business was against the Arians, or the Ariomanites,—as he often called them, as symbolizing also with Manes. And because with them the controversy was, 'whether the Son and Spirit were creatures?' in opposition hereto he constantly asserts their consubstantiality with the Father, never intending (for aught that appears) that their being was numerically the same with his; but of the same kind, uncreated, co-essential, co-eternal with his own. For so he expressly speaks in his[2] *other or additional Questions;* that is, asking[3] 'How many essences, *πόσας οὐσίας*, that is, how many sorts of essence, (as the answer will direct us to understand it,) do you acknowledge in God?'

The answer is, I say, 'one essence, one nature, one form,' (*μορφὴν,*) and adds, 'one kind,' (*ἓν γένος,*) which sufficiently expounds all the rest. He acknowledged no different kinds of essence or nature in the Godhead, but that one only, which was eternal and uncreated; agreeably to what he elsewhere says[4] against the followers of Sabellius. 'It is impossible things not eternal beings, not partaking Godhead, should be ranked or put in the same order with the Godhead.'

[1] Sect. xvii. [2] Questiones aliæ. [3] Q. 6.
[4] Contra Sabellii Gregales, tom. i., p. 657.

Afterwards speaking of the Father and the Son, he says, τοιοῦτός ἐστιν οἷος κακεῖνος, the *one* is such, not the same, as the *other;* the other such as he; and that the Son was not to be conceived under another species, (καθ' ἕτερον εἶδος,) not under a strange and foreign character, (ξένον χαρακτῆρα,) but was God as the Father. And I appeal to any man's understanding and conscience:—If that great author believed a numerical sameness of essence, common to the three persons, what should make him blame the Sabellians for[1] making the Son μονοούσιον, not ὁμοούσιον, when by the latter, in that case, he must mean the same thing as by the former?

In the forecited questions, he expressly says we were to acknowledge in the Deity τρία ἄτομα, *three individuals.* Answer to Question 7, *ubi prius.*

And elsewhere he as distinctly asserts τρία πράγματα, *three things.* And what could he mean by three things? not three deities, (as he often inculcates,) but he must certainly mean three entities, three essences; for by three things, he could not possibly mean three non-entities, or three nothings. His great care plainly was to assert the true Deity of the Son and Spirit, or their pre-eternity, or that it could never be said (ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν) there was a time when they were not; which he inculcates in a hundred places, still insisting that one Deity, one essence was common to them, but still with distinction; and as warmly inveighs against Sabellius and P. Samosatensis, as against Arius, every whit.

And that which puts his meaning quite out of doubt,[2]—speaking how the Father, Son, and Spirit, though of one and the same sort of essence, are three *hypostases,* he plainly says the nature wherein they partake is so one, as the human nature is one in all men. We men, saith he, consisting of a body and a soul, are all μιᾶς φύσεως, καὶ οὐσίας, *of one nature and substance, or essence;* but we are many *hypostases.* And to the same purpose (Dial. 2, 'de Trinitate') his *Anomœos* comparing the Father, Son, and Spirit, to a bishop, presbyter,

[1] Εκθ. πιστ. Tom. i. p. 241. Edit. Paris.

[2] Tractat. de Definitionibus. Tom. ii. 45, ubi. vid plura.

and deacon, he brings in the orthodox saying, 'They have all the same nature, being each of them man; as an angel, a man, and a horse, have different natures.'

In the meantime, because men are not inseparably and vitally united with one another, as the Divine persons are and cannot but be by reason of the necessary, eternal, perpetual emanation of the two latter from the first, they cannot admit to be called one man, as the three persons in the Godhead are and cannot but be one God. Inasmuch as these three Divine persons partake real Godhead (as existing necessarily each of them) they are each truly God; but because they partake it in necessary, eternal, vital union; and so that the first is the *radix*,—the second perpetually springing from the first,—and the third from both the other, they are therefore together one God; as branches,—though really distinct from each other,—and the root, are altogether notwithstanding but one tree, and all *homoousial*, or *consubstantial* to one another: which is an illustration familiar with the ancients. And if there be any, now-a-days, that will call this heresy, (though, as I said, I will be no heretic however,) yet if I must make a choice, I had rather be a heretic with the Ante-Nicene and Nicene fathers,—and Post-Nicene, for aught appears to the contrary, through some following centuries,—than be reputed orthodox with P. Lombard, etc., whom a German divine, not of meanest account, calls 'one of the four evangelists of Antichrist.'

But having now done with what he said he would omit but did not, (though he might to every whit as good purpose,) we come to what he overlooks not, because, he intimates, he *cannot*. And let us see whether he looks into it to any better purpose than if he had quite overlooked it. He is indeed the more excusable that he overlooks it not, because (he says) he could not. In that case there is no remedy. Nor do I see how he well could, when the 'Sober Inquirer' had once and again so directly put it in his view, and, as was said, objected it to himself. But he thinks, however, to make an irrefragable battering-ram of it, wherewith to shiver this

doctrine of the trinity all to pieces; and he brings it into play with the two horns before mentioned.

The Father, he says, for instance, 'is either infinite in his substance, his wisdom, his power, his goodness, or he is not.' With the like pompous apparatus, and even in the same terms,[1] I find a series of argumentation is by a noted sceptic adorned and set forth against the being of any God at all: 'If there be any Divine Being, it is either finite or infinite, etc.' And he reasons upon each head, as the matter could admit, and probably thought as well of the performance as our author does of his.

But let us see how much to the purpose our author uses it in the present case. The inquirer had represented three really distinct subsistents in the Godhead as possible for aught we know; not presuming to determine herein this way or that, beyond what is plain in itself or plainly revealed. And so still he thinks it may be, for aught he knows; for he professes not to know anything to the contrary. Yes, saith the considerator, but *I* do.—No doubt, if any man. But, say I, how know you? I know, saith he, they can neither be finite nor infinite, therefore there can be no such thing at all. But, say I, do you know what infinite is, or can you comprehend it?[2] Yes, very well, says he, for I have an infinite all-comprehending mind. What a cyclopic understanding is this! Nay, and he pretends he can comprehend the very being of God (otherwise all religion must cease) after he had granted, 'We (including himself) cannot comprehend the least spire of grass.' And yet that being of God is nothing else with him but *existence*, (that is, not to be nothing,) which he there vafrously inserts, but very imprudently; for every one sees he said it only to avoid the purpose he was to speak to, and so said it not to any present good purpose at all; as if he had been the Bishop's word, and all one with God's being. It is true that his being *includes* his existence: but hath he therefore a

[1] εἰ ἐστί τι θεῖον ἤτοι πεπερασμένον ἢ ἄπειρον, etc. *Sext. Empir. adversus Mathematicos.* Lib. viii.

[2] *Considerations on the Lord Bishop of Worcester's Sermon*, pp. 7, 8.

clear, distinct, and adequate conception *what* God is, because he indistinctly conceives a being, vulgarly signified by the name of God, doth *exist?* Bring the matter to creatures; and because he knows, as he may by the sight of his eye, that such a creature exists, doth he therefore understand its nature? Existence is to be *extra causas*, and this is common to all creatures; as to be necessarily, and without a cause, is peculiar to God. If therefore existence and their being be all one, all creatures are the same, and differ not from one another; for to be *extra causas* is that wherein they all agree. And extend it further;—as existence is to *be*, in *rerum naturâ*, abstracting from being caused or uncaused, and so God and creatures will be all one; and see whether this will not make all religion cease too?

But if he say, though existence abstractly taken distinguishes not God from creatures, yet *His* existence doth distinguish Him: very true. But that leads us back to the consideration of His being, of what sort that is: which therefore, if he had pleased, he might as well have let stand before as it was; and might have considered that existence, and that which doth exist, are not of the same import: or that it is not all one, to say that God doth exist, and *what* He is, that doth exist.

But it will be worth the while to examine a little further this author's comprehension of infinites. He says it is to have a clear, distinct, and adequate conception of them; so he comprehends the infinite attributes of God:—His eternity, that is, that duration by which He is without all beginning and end. This tells us what it is not. But doth it tell us what it is? as much as to say, an infinite duration is a boundless duration! a grammatical definition; or rather a mere translation of Latin into English. And so he might teach a mere Latinist what 'boundless' is, by turning the English back again into Latin. And greatly hath he edified his disciple! As much as he should, without such change of language, by saying 'invasion' is 'invasion.' And doth he give any better account of infinite wisdom and power? Are his conceptions

of them clear and distinct? It is possible to know much, and not be very wise. I do not think *that* therefore, which he gives, a very good account of wisdom. Again, *knowing* is *doing* somewhat. He speaks not now of *making* this or that, but more generally of *doing* anything. Nor doth any one know anything, but what he *can* know. Therefore his wisdom is power; for so is an ability to know, power, as truly as an ability to do anything else. Here is confusion therefore, instead of distinction. And to the comprehending anything, I should think it as requisite a man's conception be true as distinct. Now when he pretends to have distinct conceptions of God's infinite wisdom and power, if also his conceptions be true, those infinite attributes are distinct. I am sure he comprehends them not, if, whereas he clearly conceives them distinct, they are not so. But if they are distinct, they are distinct—*what?* Substances? or accidents? If the former, according to him, distinct Divine substances must be distinct Gods. If the latter, let him weather the difficulties as he can, of admitting accidents in the Divine Being. Either way, he must as little pretend to believe an omnimodous simplicity there, as the inquirer. But would he then have him give better and fuller conceptions of these infinite attributes, or rather of the infinity of them, which is his present business? No, no, that is none of the inquirer's part. He pretends not to comprehend infiniteness. It is enough for one, among mortals, to offer at that *ingens ausum*, so great a thing!

When again he says his conception of the infinite Divine wisdom, power, etc., is adequate, telling us they are those properties whereby God knows and can do whatsoever implies not a contradiction to be known and done; I ask, but doth he comprehend in his mind all those things which it implies not a contradiction for Him to know and do? If not, what is become of his adequate conception? He may so comprehend all that the most learned book contains, because he knows the title, or something of its cover; and he hath a very adequate conception of all that is contained in the

universe, because he has some general notion of what is signified by the word 'world'! Let him then pretend as long as he please to comprehend infiniteness, no sober man will believe him, and the less because he pretends it. If he put his mind upon the trial, and deal justly and truly when he hath tried, I would ask him,—let him put the notion of infiniteness upon what he pleases, space for instance,—whether, as he thinks away any whatsoever bounds of it, new ones do not immediately succeed; and let him think away those, whether still he doth not presently conceive new? Yes, but he can divert and think no more of it; that is, he can think what infinite is, by not thinking! And yet, if he did understand infinites never so well, it would be no small spite to him if a man did but assert the infiniteness of one of the persons, (the Father,) and only ἐπέχειν as to the other two, as knowing their intimate union with Him makes His wisdom, power, etc. as truly Theirs, as if it first resided in Themselves,—his argument is quite undone by it to all intents and purposes.

But I shall, however, further state and weigh this case of—knowing, or not knowing, three such hypostases cannot be infinite; and, 1. Show what might cast a thinking man upon supposing they may be all infinite for aught one knows: 2. Then consider the difficulty that is in it.

1. As to the former. That the Father virtually (or eminently rather) comprehends all being, created and uncreated, there is no doubt. Nor again, that what is from him by perpetual, natural, necessary emanation, cannot but be *homoousial* to himself,—the Athanasian differences only supposed of being unbegotten and begotten, etc. But how to understand these is the difficulty; that is, how the same numerical nature is both begotten and not begotten; nor will I determine it. Let them do it that can better. I for my part, as I have said, assert nothing in this matter, only have proposed to be considered what may be thought possible herein.

But if any would set themselves to consider this matter,

I would have them take the difficulty they are to consider entirely, and as it truly is in itself; that they may not be short in their reckoning: and to that purpose to bethink themselves what is the proper *character* (as Athanasius and before him Justin Martyr, phrase it) or *modus* of the Son, for instance;—that it is to be *begotten*. This, methinks, should bear very hard upon the mere modalists, who hereupon must say, that *to be begotten* is the only thing begotten; and so, consequently, that to be begotten, is the thing that is peculiarly said to be incarnate, and that suffered, etc. For they must assign that which distinguishes the Son from the Father, otherwise they will make the Father be begotten; which is somewhat harder than to be *Patripassians*, or to make him to have suffered.

But it must also be, upon the matter, even the same difficulty, to say, 'the same numerical nature, with the *modus*, is begotten.' For then the same numerical nature must still be both unbegotten and begotten,—which is very hard. And if they reply, 'Yes, but under a distinct *modus*:' well; but what is that distinct *modus?* And when they find it is but to be begotten, they must be hugely abashed, as one of less deep thought than they would think. For so, the nature being common both to the Father and the Son, all that is peculiar to the begotten, from the begetter, will still be but to *be begotten;* that is, when the question is asked, What only is begotten? the answer will be but as above, To be begotten. It hath hitherto, therefore, been only inquired, whether it will not seem easier to suppose each subsistent to have its own singular nature, though *homoousial*, as, (the two latter, being by emanation from the first,) it cannot but be? which hath been often inculcated, and is plain in itself. Mere arbitrary productions may be very diverse from their original; but purely natural, especially emanative, cannot be so. And then the only considerable difficulty which remains is this now before us; namely, the finiteness or infiniteness, of these three *hypostases*. It is plain they cannot all be finite. But here our present adversary

places his principal pains and labour, to prove,—what he knows nobody will deny,—that they cannot be so. And hence he carries away glorious trophies, that three, or three thousand finites will never make one infinite. *Spolia ampla!*

But how knows he they are not all infinite? That, in short, which he hath here to say, is but this, and can be no more than this, till his thoughts have run through and compassed the never-utmost range of infiniteness; namely, that he knows they are not—he knows not what! But how can he soberly say that? How can he either affirm or deny of another, what he doth not understand? Is this his demonstration of the impossibility of a trinity in the Godhead? Suppose the Father infinite, cannot the other two be infinite also, for aught he knows? How doth he know they cannot? By the same medium, by which he knows it, he may make other mortals know it too, if he think fit to communicate it: which, from so mighty confidence, especially when he pretends it to be so easy, I have hitherto expected, but in vain. Is it, because the first is infinite, therefore the two other cannot be so? I am sure he ought not to say so, whatever others may, or whatsoever the truth of the thing is,—which we shall inquire into by and by; for he hath over and over acknowledged more infinites than one, as when he ascribes infinite comprehension to the mind of man,—as hath been noted.[1] He doth not indeed say the mind is simply in itself infinite, but it is so in respect of its comprehension, which comprehension must therefore be infinite. How agreeable or consistent these terms are,—the infinite comprehension of a finite mind,—we are not to consider; let *him* take care for that, who can easily make light of such trivial difficulties as these. But in the meantime this infinite comprehension is an infinite something, not an infinite nothing; and then so many minds, so many comprehensions, and so many infinites. No doubt he includes his own mind; and it is possible he may think some other minds as comprehensive as his own:

[1] These 'Considerations,' p. 8.

and ought not to think it impossible, supposing an uncreated eternal Word, and Spirit, in the Deity, that they may be infinite, as well as the comprehension of his own and some other minds.[1] Besides, what he seems to grant of infinite 'guilts,' and 'punishments due,'—though he doth not grant the sacrifice of Christ to be an equivalent for them,—all show he thinks there may be many infinites, and even in the same kind.

But though to him, to whom it is not easy to guess what would be difficult, this would seem a very vincible difficulty; it is of much greater importance, that we may do right to truth, to consider it as it is in itself. And I acknowledge it (as I have said over and over) to be in itself a great difficulty; as all sober men have been wont to do, that have had any occasion to employ their thoughts that way.

But my part herein hath less of difficulty in it; which is only to expect and examine what another will attempt to prove from this topic, not to assert anything myself. My opponent takes upon him boldly to pronounce, 'There cannot be three distinct *hypostases* in the Deity.' Why? say I. Because, saith he, that will suppose each of them infinite, which cannot be. I say, Why can it not be? He perhaps may tell me, If any one be infinite, nothing can be added thereto, or be without its compass, much less can there be another infinite added to the former. I only now say, You talk confidently in the dark, you know not what: and so as to involve yourself in contradictions, do what you can:

1. In saying nothing can be added to what is infinite. 2. In pretending to know, if anything can be added, how much, or how little can.

1. In saying nothing can be added to, or be without the compass of, what is infinite. For then there could be no creation, which I cannot doubt him to grant. Before there was any, was there not an infinitude of being in the eternal Godhead? And hath the creation nothing in it of real being? Or will you say the being of the creature is the

[1] These 'Considerations,' pp. 31, 32.

being of God? I know what may be said (and is elsewhere said) to this, and it will better serve my purpose than his.

2. In pretending to know what can or cannot be added; or that, in the way of necessary, eternal emanation, there cannot be an infinite addition, though *not* in the way of voluntary, or arbitrary and temporary, production. The reason of the difference is too obvious to need elucidation to them that can consider. But for *your* part, (I must tell my antagonist,) you have concluded yourself, even as to that which carries the greatest appearance of impossibility: come off as you can. You say,[1] 'a body of an inch square, is not only not infinite in extension, but is a very small body; yet it hath this infinite power, to be divisible to infinity.' So, I suppose, you must say of half that inch, or a quarter, or the thousandth part of it, much more of two, or twenty, or a thousand inches. You say, indeed, 'this body itself is not infinite.' Nor will I insist upon the trite and common objection against you: 'How can anything be divisible into parts which it hath not in it?'—which yet men have not talked away, by talking it often over; still *hæret lateri*:—nor of an infinite power being lodged in a finite and so minute subject. But, in the meantime, here are infinites upon infinites, an infinite power upon an infinite power, multiplied infinitely; and still these infinite powers greater and less than other, as either the inch is augmented or diminished. And he saith, 'the mind of man hath the property of infinite or eternal duration.'[2] Therefore so many minds, so many infinites. And he must suppose the infinite duration of some minds to be greater than of others, unless he think his own mind to be as old as Adam's; or do not only hold their pre-existence, but that they were all created in the same moment; which if he do, I am sure he can never prove: and so, for aught he knows, there may not only be many infinites, but one greater than another.

What therefore exceeds all limits that are assignable or any way conceivable by us, as we are sure the Divine Being

[1] 'Considerations,' p. 8. [2] *Ibid.*

doth, it is impossible for us to know what differences that vast infinitude contains. And we shall, therefore, but talk at random, and with much more presumption than knowledge, when we take upon us to pronounce it impossible there should be three infinite *hypostases* in the Godhead: especially considering that most intimate vital union that they are supposed to have each with other, in respect whereof the Son is said to be ἐνυπόστατος, existing in the Father, (as Athanasius's phrase is,) agreeably to the language of Scripture:[1] and which, by parity of reason, is to be conceived of the Holy Ghost too, who is also said to "search all things, even the deep things of God."[2] In respect of which union, and the ἐμπεριχώρησις which may thence be collected, whatever of real perfection, wisdom, power, goodness, etc., is in any one, is each one's as truly as any one's, all being originally in the Father, as the first and ever-living Fountain of all;—as was said, 'Sober Inquiry,' Sees. xix.; xx.

But whereas the considerator urges, 'If the Father be infinite in his substance, in his wisdom, his power, his goodness, he is God in the most adequate and perfect sense of the word,' I say, Well, and what then? If therefore he mean the Son and the Holy Ghost must be excluded the Godhead, let him prove his consequence if he can. And he may find the answer to it, 'Sober Inquiry,' Sec. xx. I shall not transcribe; nor love, when I have writ a book, to write it over again. His notion may fit pagans well enough, or those who are not otherwise taught. Christians are directed to understand that the Deity includes Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Their equality I acknowledge with the mentioned Athanasian exception; notwithstanding which, that they equally communicate in the most characteristic difference of the Deity from all creatures, namely, necessity of existence, is conceivable enough.

To sum up all; the considerator I understand, even by the whole management of his discourse, and especially by the conclusion of that part wherein the inquirer is concerned,

[1] John xiv. 11, and elsewhere. [2] 1 Cor. ii. 10.

to have most entirely given up this cause, as ever did any man. The inquirer's only undertaking was to maintain 'the possibility of a trinity in the Godhead,' in opposition to his former daring assertion, of its being impossible, and nonsense.

He now, in conclusion, says the inquirer saw there must be a *nexus;* intimating, if there can, that he hath gained his point; but, it is added, 'he durst not venture to say what it was.' To which I must say,—

That this is most incautiously said; I will not say, deceitfully, though I know it is said untruly; and he might have known or remembered, too, that he (the inquirer) often spoke of it, as a necessary, natural, eternal, vital, and most intimate union. He further says, he only explains it by the union of soul and body. Which again,—

1. Is so great a misrepresentation, that I wonder he would say it here, when he himself but two or three pages off recites as the inquirer's words, 'If God could unite into one, two such contrary natures, let any man give me a reason why he might not (much more) first make, and then unite two, and if two, why not three, spirits,' etc. Is this only to explain it by the union of soul and body?

But by the way, that 'first make, and then unite,' was none of the inquirer's, but appears thrust in to make what was manifestly possible, seem impossible. *Sic notus.*—Let two substances be created entire with no natural propension to each other, they are capable of no natural union without change of their natures. Who sees not, it were a contradiction to suppose them still the same, and not the same? But suppose them created with mutual aptitudes to union, and united, what should hinder but they may continue united, without being confounded?

2. And it is said impertinently, as well as untruly; for what if he had not explained it at all, is it therefore impossible,—which it belonged to him to prove, or he did nothing; and he *hath* done nothing towards it. I have asked him before, and now I put it again seriously to him,

whether he do in his conscience believe this a good argument: 'Such a union, that is, natural, necessary, etc. hath no pattern or parallel in the creation; therefore it is impossible in the nature of God?'

For what he adds,—'That the soul and body in a man are not united into one substance or essence, nor possibly can be,'—the cause indeed depends not on it, but lies remote from it. Methinks however it is very feat, and shows him pinched, that he can be brought to this! Hath a man no substance? Is he a shadow? Or hath he no essence? Is he a nonentity? Or is his essence a body? Then a body is a man. Or is his essence a spirit? Then, a spirit is a man. (If he say either of these, I wish he would tell us the quantity of those propositions, that we may know whether he means that every body is a man, or every spirit is a man? I am sure where the essence is, there must be the *essentiatum*.) Or whether soul and body united, make nothing different from either, or both, disunited? Or whether a man be only such a thing as a pie? Or why might not a pudding serve as well, if made up of several ingredients? He hath greatly indeed obliged mankind for such an honour done them! If indeed the cause depended on it, he would have good store of philosophers to confute, and all that have any concern for their own kind, before he could disprove the possibility of the supposed union in the Deity; and you have nothing for it but his bare word, which (at least, without the addition of his name) will not do the business. Nor, if he could also bring us a demonstration against the union of soul and body, can he thereby prove such a union as we suppose in the Godhead impossible. The case is quite another. The union of the soul and body was never by me called essential; for I well know, if they were essentially united, in the strict sense, they could never be disunited. But it is commonly called a substantial union; and I called it *natural* in respect of the principle, *nature*, in contradistinction to *art*. As for the supposed union we speak of in the Deity, that being necessary, original, eternal, it must be essential, or none;

but with such distinction as before was supposed. For it was union, not identity, that was meant; which union, with such distinction, till they be proved impossible, the inquirer's cause is untouched: and is certainly, to any such purpose, not in the least touched by the considerator. Whether there be any such union that may admit to be called essential among the creatures, doth neither make nor mar. We have never said there was, nor doth the stress of the cause lie upon it.

I find indeed an ingenious, merry gentleman animadverts upon a postscript writ against the 'Sober Inquiry,' and upon a 'Letter' in answer to it, who at a venture calls all essential union, essential contradiction and substantial nonsense. Who this is, I will not pretend to guess, only I guess him not to be the same with the considerator; for this, besides other reasons, that he calls the author of the 'Considerations' a great man; and I scarce think he would call himself so. His wit, and sportful humour, I should have liked better in a less serious affair. For this he boldly pronounces, in immediate reference to the trinity itself, (that the world might know he hath a confidence at least equal to his wit,) 'I can easily abstain from asserting that any created unions are to be called strictly essential, because then they must be simply indissoluble.' And I see not but whatsoever things the Creator hath united, he may disunite, if he be so pleased. Yet one might have expected this author to have been a little more civil to him whom he styles the late famous Dr. More, who hath published to the world his express sentiments in this matter,—that created spirits have real amplitude, made up of indiscerptible parts, essentially united, so as not to be separable without annihilation of the whole. One would think he should not have treated him so as to make his essential union 'substantial nonsense.' But there are those left in the world, who have that veneration for the Doctor as to think it no indecent rudeness to this gentleman, not to put his judgment in the balance against the Doctor's, or to distinguish between his calling it nonsense, and proving it so.

But if any wonder that they who think there is no such thing as an essential union among creatures, do yet think there may be in the uncreated Being, they will show themselves mighty wise in their wonder; that is, in wondering that the creatures are not God. And if they further hereupon inquire why we will then make use of unions, not essential, among creatures, to illustrate that which is supposed essential in the uncreated Being; and expect very particular, distinct accounts of everything so represented; they will show themselves as wise in their expectations; that is, that they think nothing can serve to illustrate, unless it be like in all respects.

That question still returns. Is everything to be judged by any man of sense impossible in God, whereof he hath not given distinct and explicit accounts and illustrations from somewhat in the creatures? And another will be added,—Is there anything originally in God, not essential to him? But when the world is so full of instances of substantial unions without confusion or identification, that he cannot so much as name me a created substance that he can be sure exists absolutely simple, I am sure it can be no contradiction to suppose that there may be uncreated, necessary, eternal union without confusion or identification; and that it would be, as he phrases it, 'essential contradiction or substantial nonsense,' to say that things united necessarily (though distinct) can possibly ever admit of separation. And if our modern antitrinitarians (for I will not call them by the inept name of unitarians, which as rightfully belongs to them whose adversaries they are pleased to be, as to themselves, and therefore cannot distinguish the one from the other) would allow it to be their method to understand the doctrine of the orthodox ancients, before they decry and hoot at it, they would find that as they allow sufficient distinction of the sacred hypostases, so the union they assert is not such as identifies them, but only signifies them to be inseparable. So speaks Athanasius himself: 'We think not, as the Sabellians, that the Son is of one and the same

essence with the Father, but consubstantial; nor do we assert[1] three *hypostases*, separated as with men, bodily, lest with the Gentiles we should admit polytheism,' etc.

So do Liberius and he agree in sentiment. The one says,[2] 'The Son is not separated from the Father's hypostasis.' The other,[3] 'We hold not the Son divided from the Father,' etc.

And upon the most impartial, faithful, and diligent search and consideration, I do solemnly declare there needed not more of rationality or intelligibleness in this doctrine, to keep it from being ridiculed as contradictious and nonsense; but only less prejudice and more modesty in the opposers of it, with more reverence of the Divine Majesty; upon this obvious apprehension, that if it be true, it must be sacred, divine truth.

This author would fain have me with him to the playhouse, whither really I have no leisure to accompany him, nor much temptation; for I perceive it hath filled his mind with ideas not useful to my purpose; nor, I think, to any good one of his own. If there he learned to jest away that which should be the best part of himself; and of which Socrates, dying, told his friends it would be gone far enough out of their hands, and, for that which was left behind, they might bury, or do with it what they pleased; if there he was taught to ridicule the holy apostle's distinction of an ὁ ἔσω, and ὁ ἔξω, *an inner and an outer man*, and when he hath thrown the former of these out of his notion of himself,—for my part, I must think of that which is left, that the 'silly Indian' is the 'less silly creature' of the two.

And besides, as he is too much given to play, to mind anything of serious discourse, so I find he is not throughout honest in his play neither; but that even when he pretends to sit out, and be but a spectator, only taking care that there be fair play, he falls in himself, and plays booty. Nor do I find he hath anything of argument in his discourse, which

[1] Μεμερισμένας. Εκθ. πιστ. [2] Liber. Epist. ad Athan. οὐ μερίζεται.
[3] Rescript. Ath. ad Liberium. οὐ διακεχωρισμένον.

hath not been considered already in the discourse I have had with the considerator. I therefore take leave of them both together, and of you too, sir, being in great sincerity,

Your affectionate

Humble servant,

THE INQUIRER.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE "Letter to the Clergy of both Universities," came not to my sight or notice, till some hours after the last sheet of this discourse was brought me from the press; I have not time therefore to say much to it, nor yet should say more than I do, had I never so much. The author seems to think what he was now doing, as to the 'Inquiry,' superfluous; because he said it was so fully done by an abler hand, etc. In the meantime he was in ill case, that he was neither able to write to any purpose, nor be silent; a most deplorable double impotency! But he hath, notwithstanding his modesty, shown a double ability, to invent and make an hypothesis of his own fingers' ends, and then most dexterously to combat that shadow. Three inadequate Gods, is indeed (to use his own phrase) his own invention, constantly disavowed by the inquirer; who, with the generality of trinitarians, calls the three subsistents in the Godhead, God; being each of them necessarily existent, but none of them alone, exclusively, a God.

What art he hath, is shown in fighting this his own figment; as also that of *parts* of the Deity, other than *conceptible*,—which no man can avoid. So we have his dream of a third part of a God, about which he so learnedly raves in his dream as to disprove, as effectually, any God at all. For I appeal to what sense he hath left himself, whether power alone be God, exclusive of wisdom and goodness? Then it is an inadequate, or a not complete notion of God; then by his profound reasoning, not eternal. No more are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost parts, unless you be enamoured of the *bull*,—impartible parts, that never were parted, nor ever can be: as what are necessarily united (though unconfounded) cannot, without nonsense and contradiction, be said to be parted. His fiction, that what is from the eternal Father

by necessary emanation, cannot be eternal, but must have a beginning, is of the same stamp. He did not need, when he wrote, to have abandoned all logic and common sense, that would have told him *relata sunt simul naturâ.* His so confidently taking it for granted, on all hands, that all infinites are equal, shows his little compass of thought, and how unacquainted he is with the difficulties of a controversy wherein yet he will be so over-meddlesome. *Qui pauca respicit*, etc. But who so bold as ———? I leave him to compound that difference with his abler considerator, whether one inch and two inches be equal? And so bid him good-night.

A LETTER,

WRITTEN OUT OF THE COUNTRY,

TO A PERSON OF QUALITY IN THE CITY,

WHO TOOK OFFENCE AT THE LATE SERMON OF DR. STILLINGFLEET,
DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S, BEFORE THE LORD MAYOR.

GALATIANS VI. 1.

"CONSIDERING THYSELF, LEST THOU ALSO BE TEMPTED."

"Johannes Coletus, Decanus quem dicunt Divi Pauli,—apud suos Anglos alter pene Apostolus Paulus habitus est."—POLYD. VIRGIL.

A LETTER CONCERNING DR. STILLINGFLEET'S SERMON.

Sir,—I perceive your mind is disturbed; which my friendship with you can no more let me be unconcerned for, than if I heard you were sick; nor less to study your relief. Such may be the cause and measure of your passion, and such the disproportion between the one and the other, as to need it a great deal more, though yet perhaps to deserve it less. For your sickness might be your infelicity only; but a perturbation that exceeds its cause, cannot but be your fault: which kind of evil, though it be much greater, and therefore needs an application for the removing of it, yet it can challenge less help from another; because you are your own afflicter, and may, by dependence on Divine help, when you please, cure yourself,—which no man else can do for you.

But if another may contribute towards it by laying before you apt considerations which you are yourself to apply, you know you are to expect it from no man's good will more than mine. If indeed you expect much from my ability, that is another fault, entirely your own, and whereto you could have no temptation.

Thus much I freely profess to you,—that I have a great value of an equal temper and composure of mind, not apt to be unduly moved, or entertain anything that occurs with indecent perturbation, or other resentment than is due and suitable to the occasion; and desire it more than either to be in the best external circumstances, or not to be in the worst.

As I wish for myself, I wish for you; and therefore am willing to place my endeavour accordingly, where it may be in a possibility of effecting somewhat to your advantage, and where it is most desirable it should.

In the present case, the fault I find with you is, that your resentment of the matter you complain of is undue and not proportionable to the occasion. And whereas you seem to labour under the distemper and excess of a twofold passion,—of *fear*, lest a just and good cause, as you and I do both account, should suffer some great prejudice by this opposition of Dr. Stillingfleet; and of *anger*, that he from whom better things might have been expected, should attempt anything in this kind,—I shall hereupon endeavour to represent to you the causelessness both of your fear and, in great part, of your anger; and first defend the cause against Dr. Stillingfleet, and then add somewhat in defence of Dr. Stillingfleet against you.

As to the FORMER we are:—I. To give the plain state of it, with the Doctor's judgment against us in it. II. To discuss the matter with the Doctor, and show; 1. The indefensibleness of that judgment. 2. The inefficacy of the Doctor's attempt to defend it.

I. It is first necessary that we have a true state of the cause itself before our eyes; which is plainly this,—

That as there are very great numbers of people, beyond what the ministers of parishes, in divers places, can possibly perform ministerial duty unto; so there are withal very many that cannot be satisfied in conscience, to intrust their souls and their spiritual concernments to the pastoral care and conduct of the parochial ministry only; though they generally have a very reverend esteem of divers who are of it: do, many of them, very frequently partake of some part of their labours, and rejoice in them as great ornaments and real blessings to the Christian church. But these are very unproportionable in number to the necessities of the people, and are by legal restraints tied up *one* way, as *they* by conscientious, are *another*, in respect of some principal parts

of Christian worship,—without which they should be visibly in the condition of pagans.

There are also many persons who have been devoted to the service of God and his church in the ministerial function,—some of them in the way which now obtains, others in a way which this reverend author did not disapprove,—who are not satisfied in conscience about the terms upon which they might have continued or may be admitted parochial incumbents.

So that here are numerous flocks scattered without pastors, here are many pastors without flocks.

The people, it is true, on whose behalf these papers are more especially written, are in this destitute condition by their own scruples. Nor is it the present design to justify all those scruples. But they are, with many, of long continuance, and, for aught appears, unremovable. If they should be deferred, and bidden to use patience while such further endeavours are used with them as this sermon contains, yet death will have no patience nor be deferred. So that there are multitudes passing into eternity out of a Christian nation, having no benefit of Christian ordinances; no means of instruction in the truth and doctrines of the Christian religion, in order to their salvation.

The course which is, *de facto*, taken in this distress for their relief is that which the reverend author bends himself against in this sermon. And there are two sorts of persons concerned in it: the *people*, who, rather than return to the state of paganism, implore the help of these unemployed ministers, desiring them to perform the duty of Christian ministers towards them; and the *ministers*, who, rather than they should cease to be Christians, or *themselves* always cease from the work of ministers, comply with their desires; and, as they can, allow them their desired help.

This author doth more directly and professedly speak to the case of the people; to that of the ministers, only by way of oblique reflection.

You and I, who, among the former, do often partake in

the worship and ordinances of God in the *separate* assemblies —though we are not so squeamish as to balk the *public*, nor so unjust and ungrateful as not to thank God for the excellent advantages that are sometimes to be met with there—are both concerned, and led by the Doctor's discourse, to consider what is said as to this case of ours: which yet I would have us consider not so appropriately as to exclude *them* our very compassionate consideration, that are more pinched and confined to narrower limits, by their own scruples, than we are; and whose number you cannot but apprehend to be so great as to call for a very large compassion in considering their case.

It is indeed a case of far prospect, and which looks down upon after-times. You know how easily it may be deduced all along from the beginning of the English Reformation, when some very eminent among our Reformers were not well satisfied with the ceremonial part of the constitution settled at that time; how an unsatisfied party hath gradually increased from age to age among the common people also. They are now grown very numerous; and unless some very overpowering impression upon men's minds, not reasonably to be expected according to common measures, should alter the case, it is still likely to increase in succeeding ages.

You are not ignorant that no one thing is more commonly scrupled by this unsatisfied party, than the addition to that federal rite in the dedicating of their children to God,—the signing them with the sign of the cross; which many (how justly or unjustly I am not now to discuss) esteem so sinful a practice, that, rather than admit it, they will choose not to offer their children to baptism. Nor is it in itself of less weight—perhaps it is of much greater—that, in this solemn dedication, they have no opportunity of performing the parental duty of covenanting with God on behalf of their own children; but *that* part, with the exclusion of themselves, is to be done by others, whom God hath not concerned in the business; and who, after the solemnity is over, are never like to concern themselves. And there are divers

other scruples besides, in reference to this and other parts of worship that, with multitudes, are in no great probability to admit of cure.

Now let us see what the reverend Doctor's judgment is upon this state of our case, who dissent from the established way,—whether the people or their ministers; and that both concerning what they *do*, and what, by consequence from his judgment upon their case, they are to *suffer*.

For the practice of the people in this case (at least the negative part of it) he hath some charity in his censure; for in their declining to join in the public assemblies, he believes them generally to practise according to their judgment, as he professes:[1] for the *ministers*, most of them, none at all; who, as he says in the same place, he believes go *against* theirs. His words are, 'I dare say, if most of the preachers at this day in the separate meetings were soberly asked their judgments, whether it were lawful for the people to join with us in the public assemblies, they would not deny it; and yet the people that frequent them, generally judge otherwise. For it is not to be supposed, that faction among them should so commonly prevail beyond interest.'

But his judgment concerning what both are to undergo is eventually and in the sequel, as he states their case, much more hard in respect of the people, who cannot relieve themselves; whereas the ministers, according to the notion he hath of them, presently may.

We are to attend chiefly to what he says in reference to the lay-people, and shall consider,—i. How severe he is towards them; and ii. How well consistent he is therein with himself.

i. His severity towards those of us in respect of what we practise, who put ourselves under the pastoral care of other than the parochial ministers, is to be seen in what he proposes to himself to evince,[2] namely, 'That our proceeding to the forming of separate congregations, that is, under other teachers and by other rules than what the established

[1] Page 37 of his Sermon.

[2] Page 20.

religion allows, is the present case of separation which he intends to consider, and to make the sinfulness and mischief of it appear.' He doth, you see, in short absolutely pronounce our practice in this case to be *sinful* and *mischievous*.

Now it is hence also to be collected how hard things he would have us *suffer*, upon supposition of our only remaining unsatisfied to join ourselves into the parochial communion. He doth not indeed bespeak for us gibbets, whipping-posts, or dungeons; nor, directly, anything grievous to our flesh. But to such as consider themselves to have souls made for an everlasting state, the doom which his words imply in the mentioned place cannot be thought gentle: which that you may apprehend the more distinctly, observe that he hath nothing to say against our 'bare suspending communion in some particular rites which we modestly scruple, while we use it in what we judge lawful,'[1]—whereas[2] he supposes us generally to judge it unlawful to join in the public assemblies,—to which purpose he also speaks in his late 'Dialogues,'[3] giving his antagonist an account of what he had said in his 'Irenicum,' to the matter now in discourse; namely, 'That some scrupulous and conscientious men, after all endeavours used to satisfy themselves, may remain unsatisfied as to the lawfulness of some imposed rites, but dare not proceed to positive separation from the church; but are willing to comply in all other things save in those rites which they still scruple: and concerning these he puts the question, whether such bare nonconformity do involve such men in the guilt of schism?' And this he confesses he resolved negatively, approving or not disavowing that resolution. Thus far indeed he well agrees with himself; and seems to have no quarrel with us.

But consider the fatal consequence. He well knows that if we suspend communion in the rite of the cross, upon our never so modest scruple, we cannot have our children ministerially dedicated to God in the ordinance of baptism, nor be so ourselves, if, being adult, we remain any of us unbaptized,—as he may well apprehend many among us are; nor if we decline

[1] Page 20. [2] Page 37. [3] Pp. 171, 172.

the use of sponsors as to what we conceive should be performed by parents for their children, and by adult persons for themselves: and that if we kneel not before the consecrated elements at the Lord's Table, we are not to partake of his Holy Supper. Yea, and what if we scruple somewhat that is more than ritual: to sit under the ministry of a noted drunkard or open enemy to godliness as our teacher and guide, when we might enjoy the fruitful labours of one that hath not his qualifications every Lord's-day? No, by no means; without limitation or the supposition of any possible case wherein it may be otherwise, a meeting never so little besides the established course, he will 'make appear is sinful and mischievous,' and not tolerable upon any terms!

What then would he have us do? He directs us indeed afterward to the endeavour of satisfaction. But what shall we do if after our utmost endeavours our dissatisfaction remain? What, while we are endeavouring? which may be all our days in vain. What if we can *never* be satisfied concerning 'the established way' of baptism for ourselves and our children, and of partaking the body and blood of our Lord and Saviour? nor to hear or give countenance to such a one pretending to preach "the glorious gospel of the blessed God," who either substantially perverts and depraves it, or whose profligate life proclaims him an opposer and enemy to the holy rules and design of it? nor to commit ourselves to the pastoral care and charge of a less exceptionable person,—yea though otherwise never so deserving,—that hath tied his own hands, and is under such restraints that he cannot, or so disinclined that he will not, dispense the ordinances of Christ in such a way as wherein with satisfaction to our consciences we may enjoy them.

Read over the Doctor's sermon again and again, and you will find no course is prescribed us, but to sit still without any enjoyment of Christian ordinances at all. And with how great numbers must this be the case! for himself professes to believe, that the people that frequent the separate meetings (who you know are not a few) do *generally* judge it to be

unlawful to join in the public assemblies. And are we always to sit still thus? That is to exchange visible Christianity for visible, at least negative, paganism!

This, if you take the whole compass of it, is a thing of awful importance; that so great a limb of a Christian nation, —they and their posterity,—should be paganized from age to age and cut off from the whole body of the Christian community, only because they scruple some things, the least exceptionable whereof are no part of the Christian institution,—as himself, and they whose advocate he is, will freely confess,—nor do necessarily belong to it; being, as they contend, but *indifferent* things.

He seems rather contented we should not be Christians at all, than not to be Christians of this particular mode: that we should rather want the substance of Christ's gospel and sacraments, than not have them accompanied with confessedly needless additions, and which we fear to be forbidden us by their Lord and ours.

We do sincerely profess, wherein we decline the communion he invites us to, we only displease him and those of his way and mind, out of a *real* fear of otherwise displeasing God. We agree with them in far greater things than we can differ in. We are of that 'one body' which they themselves profess to be of, so far as mere Christianity is the distinction and collective bond of it, and desire to be under the conduct and government of that 'one Spirit.' We are called with them in that 'one hope' of our calling, and earnestly expect— whatever hard thoughts they have of us—to meet many a one of them in the participation of the blessed hoped end of that calling. We acknowledge that 'one Lord,' that 'one faith,' that 'one baptism,' or covenant which the baptism of our Lord's appointment seals, and that 'one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all.' Yet because we cannot, we dare not, consent with them to the additions which belong not, and which we fear are unduly affixed, to the religion of Christians, we are adjudged to be— as much as in them is—cut off from Christ, deprived of the

dear pledges of his love and acquisitions of his blood, "are driven out from the inheritance of the Lord," and it is in effect said to us, "Go and serve other gods." Thus far the severity of this reverend author towards us, extends: which while we thus truly represent and recount, let us also,

ii. Consider what agreement it holds with what we elsewhere observe from him. We have already taken notice, that 'for our bare nonconformity' he acquits us of the guilt of 'schism.' And he says, 'he doth not confound bare suspending communion in some particular rites which persons do modestly scruple, and using it in what they judge to be lawful, with either total or at least ordinary forbearance of communion in what they judge to be lawful, and proceeding to the forming of separate congregations,' etc.[1] It is this latter he severs and singles out for his opposition. Against our 'suspending communion in some particular rites,' which we judge unlawful, 'if we use it in what we judge lawful,'—which I, with him, presume the lay-dissenters in England generally do,—he hath nothing to say: yea, and undertaking to show '*what* error of conscience doth excuse a man from sin in following the dictates of it;' he tells us,[2] that 'if the error be wholly involuntary, that is, if it be caused by invincible ignorance,'—which he thus explains in the following words,—'or after using the best means for due information of his conscience, though the act may be a fault in itself, yet it shall not be imputed to him for a sin; because it wanted the consent of the mind, by which the will is determined.'

And now, sir, I beseech you consider,—1. When he confesses if we be willing to be satisfied, and our error be involuntary, it shall not be imputed to us for a sin; why are we so severely dealt with for what is not to be imputed to us for a sin? If it were any, methinks it should not deserve such rigour at the hands of men, that are themselves also liable to mistakes and errors. Is it so very criminal, if every poor illiterate dissenter in England (man or woman) cannot

[1] Page 20 of this sermon. [2] Page 44.

in all their days attain to a better and more settled judgment in such dubious matters, than this reverend person had himself arrived to twenty years ago? especially that never had, or were capable of having those peculiar helps and inducements to temper and reform their judgments, that he hath enjoyed. It is a long time that his own judgment has been ripening to that maturity as at length to think it fit and seasonable to say so much as he hath for the reforming of ours, even in this sermon. Methinks he should not be so very quick and hard towards us, upon so slender a cause as our scrupling some particular rites, to adjudge us and ours to be totally deprived of baptism, which themselves count *necessary* to our salvation; and of the other ordinances of Christ, which they do not think *unnecessary*.

And consider secondly, whereas he says, that 'if a man err after using the best means for due information of his conscience,—it shall not be imputed to him as a sin.' What if we err *this* error, (as he counts it,) after using the best means for due information,—that we ought, rather than to return to the state of paganism, to bear our part in the forming of such meetings for the worship of God, as wherein we may, with the satisfaction of our own consciences, enjoy all His holy ordinances? It will surely be within the compass of this his general position, and not be imputable as a sin. Then it is to be hoped we should rather choose to do so, than paganize ourselves, or live in the wilful neglect of His institutions: which to do by our own choice, when we might do otherwise, we cannot but think a very great sin.

If here the Doctor should assume to himself to tell us not only that we err herein,—whereof we are to regard his proof, as it shall be considered by and by, more than his affirmation,—but also that our error is wilful, we shall appeal from him to One that better knows, how willingly, how gladly we should receive information, and admit the belief that we ought to content ourselves entirely and only with such provisions as 'the established religion'—to use the Doctor's phrase—allows us, if the evidence of the thing itself did not seem

irresistibly and unavoidably to persuade us otherwise. And for him to say so, were but to suppose men wilful only for not being of his mind, who can as easily think *him* so, for not being of theirs.

But this cannot be a question between the Doctor and us; whom, as we have taken notice above, he hath so far obliged, as to admit,[1] that 'we generally judge as we practise, and that it is not to be supposed that faction among us should so commonly prevail beyond interest.'

But since this appears to be his determination concerning us, and that his assertion seems positive and peremptory,—that in this our case, 'to proceed to the forming of congregations under other teachers, and by other rules than what the established religion allows, were a sinful and mischievous separation;'[2] we are in the next place, II. To discuss the matter with the Doctor; wherein we shall endeavour to show, 1. The indefensibleness of the judgment the Doctor hath given in this case; which will both infer, and in some part excuse, what we are afterwards to discover: namely, 2. The infirmity of what is alleged by him in this attempt of his to defend it.

1. For the former, it being obvious to common observation, that a natural self-indulgence and aptness to decline and waive what is of more terrible import to themselves, doth usually insinuate and influence men's minds in their judging of such cases, we are the more concerned,—because a favourable false judgment will do us no good,—with an impartial strictness to hold ourselves to the thing itself. And when we most strictly do so, methinks the Doctor should have somewhat a hard province of it. For his determination amounts to thus much,—that we ought to be kept in a state of damnation for scrupling the ceremonies; that is, to be deprived of the necessary means of our salvation: and *that*, while he accounts our scruple (after the use of due means for our information) not imputable to us as a sin! And not *that* only; but that we ought to consent to our own damnation for this *no sin* of

[1] Page 37. [2] Page 20.

ours; inasmuch as it would be sinful and mischievous to procure to ourselves the necessary means of our salvation in another way, while we apprehend that, without our sin, we cannot have them in the way which he allows us!

We are indeed satisfied that our sin, one way or other, would contribute little to our salvation: but when also we are satisfied that we cannot enjoy the means of salvation in *his* way without sin, and he tells us, we cannot without sin enjoy them in *our own;* we hope every door is not shut up against us, and cannot think the merciful and holy God hath so stated our case, as to reduce us to a necessity of sinning to get out of a state of damnation! And therefore this reverend author having already determined that our remedy cannot lie, as our consciences are hitherto informed, in coming over to him and his way;—for he believes we generally judge it unlawful to join with them in the public assemblies,[1] and says,[2] 'That no man that hath any conscience will speak against the power of it, and he that will speak against it, hath no reason to be regarded in what he says,' (as no question he expected to be, otherwise he had not given himself so much trouble,) and concludes, 'That we should sin in going against it;'[3] as he also thinks we should in acting with it, which (as is necessarily implied) we as yet see not;—our great hope upon the whole matter is, that our relief must lie in taking the way which we do take; and that it cannot be proved to be sinful.

We reckon it is not; and that the Doctor's judgment herein is simply indefensible, because whatsoever is sinful must transgress some law immediately divine, or that obliges by virtue of the divine law: and we cannot find that God hath made any law, or enabled any made by others, to oblige us so far, in our present circumstances, as that we should be involved in the guilt of sin by some variation from the letter of it. For any divine law that can be supposed to oblige us to the use of the things we scruple or else to live without the worship and ordinances of God, not knowing any such ourselves, we must wait until we be informed of it.

[1] Page 37. [2] Page 43. [3] Page 44.

And that his law doth give an obliging force so far to any other, we as yet understand not. Wheresoever he hath been pleased to lodge and entrust the keys of the church, we do not find he hath appointed them to that use, to admit us into the communion of his worship and ordinances, or totally to exclude us, upon such terms. And herein we suppose we have the Doctor consenting with us; who in his 'Irenicum'[1] plainly asserts 'That the office which the power of the keys implies is ministerial, and not authoritative; declarative, and not juridical;' and says in the preface to the same book, that 'He that came to take away the unsupportable yoke of the Jewish ceremonies, did never intend to gall the disciples' necks with another instead of it.' Whereto he immediately adds in the same preface: 'And it would be strange the church should require more than Christ himself did; and make other conditions of her communion, than our Saviour did of discipleship. What possible reason can be assigned or given why such things should not be sufficient for communion with a church, which are sufficient for eternal salvation? And certainly those things are sufficient for that, which are laid down by our Lord and Saviour in his word. What ground can there be why Christians should not stand upon the same terms now, which they did in the time of Christ and his apostles? Was not religion sufficiently guarded and fenced in them? Was there ever more true and cordial reverence in the worship of God? What charter hath Christ given the church to bind men up to more than himself hath done, or to exclude those from her society, who may be admitted into heaven? Will Christ ever thank men at the great day for keeping such out from communion with his church, whom he will vouchsafe not only crowns of glory to, but it may be *aureolæ* too, if there be any such things there? The grand commission the apostles were sent out with, was only to teach what Christ had commanded them; not the least intimation of any power given them to impose or require anything beyond what himself had spoken to them, or they were

[1] Page 216.

directed to by the immediate guidance of the Spirit of God. It is not whether the things commanded and required be lawful or no? it is not whether indifferences may be determined or no? it is not how far Christians are bound to submit to a restraint of their Christian liberty? which I now inquire after, (of those things in the treatise itself,) but whether they do consult for the church's peace and unity who suspend it upon such things? how far either the example of our Saviour or his apostles doth warrant such rigorous impositions? We never read the apostles making laws but of things supposed necessary. When the council of apostles met at Jerusalem for deciding a case that disturbed the church's peace, we see they will lay no other burden, πλὴν τῶν ἐπάναγκες τούτων, besides these necessary things.[1] It was not enough with them that the things would be necessary when they had required them, but they looked on an antecedent necessity either absolute or for the present state, which was the only ground of their imposing those commands upon the Gentile Christians. There were, after this, great diversities of practice and varieties of observations among Christians, but the Holy Ghost never thought those things fit to be made matters of laws, to which all parties should conform; all that the apostles required as to these, was mutual forbearance and condescension towards each other in them. The apostles valued not indifferences at all; and those things it is evident they accounted such, which whether men did them or not, was not of concernment to salvation. And what reason is there why men should be so strictly tied up to such things, which they may do, or let alone, and yet be very good Christians still? Without all controversy the main inlet of all the distractions, confusions, and divisions of the Christian world, hath been by adding other conditions of church communion than Christ hath done.'

Nor am *I* now inquiring whether the things commanded be lawful or no? nor whether indifferences may be determined or no? nor how far Christians are bound to submit

[1] Acts xv. 29.

to a restraint of their Christian liberty? but only inquiring (as he there doth) concerning the 'charter given by Christ' for the binding men up more than Himself hath done? And I further inquire, by *what power* they can be bound which Christ hath *not given?* And if there be no such power to bind them, suppose the things required were all lawful—which if it can be evinced, I should rejoice to see done—yet while they cannot in conscience think they are, how can they apprehend themselves bound to be without the means of salvation, which 'Christ's charter' entitles them to?

I readily grant it is fit a man do many things for peace and common order's sake which, otherwise, no law doth formally oblige him to; that is, supposing he can do those things without intolerable prejudice to himself. And so it is commonly determined in the matter of scandals. But can it be thought a man is to put himself out of the state or way of salvation in compliment to such as will otherwise take offence? and be so courteous as to perish for ever, rather than they shall be displeased?

Yea, and it may be moreover added, that our course being accounted lawful, must also (as the Doctor speaks in another case) be thought a duty: for the things that are as means necessary to our salvation, are also necessary by Divine precept. We are commanded to hear God's word; to devote ourselves and our children to God in baptism; and, at the Lord's own table, to "remember him, and show forth his death until he come." And if we compare together certain positions of this reverend author, we cannot see but he must, as our case is, acknowledge our obligation to the practice which he here seems to blame. For in his 'Irenicum,' p. 109, he asserts, 'That every Christian is under an obligation to join in church society with others; because it is his duty to profess himself a Christian, and to own his religion publicly, and to partake of the ordinances and sacraments of the gospel, which cannot be without society with some church or other.' And he after adds, on the same page, 'It hath been a case disputed of by some, (particularly by Grotius, the

supposed author of a little tract, "An semper sit communicandum per symbola?" when he designed the syncretism with the church of Rome,) whether in a time when churches are divided, it be a Christian's duty to communicate with any of those parties which divide the church, and not rather to suspend communion from all of them. A case not hard to be decided; for either the person questioning it doth suppose the churches divided to remain true churches, but some to be more pure than other; in which case, by virtue of his general obligation to communion, he is bound to adhere to that church which appears most to retain its evangelical purity.' To which purpose he further tells us,[1] he knows not 'whether Chrysostom's act were to be commended, who after being made a deacon in the church of Antioch by Meletius, upon his death; because Flavianus came in irregularly as bishop of the church, would neither communicate with him, nor with Paulinus another bishop at that time in the city; nor with the Meletians, but for three years' time withdrew himself from communion with any of them.' And, 'where any church is guilty of corruptions both in doctrine and practice, which it avoweth and professeth, and requireth the owning them as necessary conditions of communion with her, there a non-communion with that church is necessary,' and a total and positive separation is lawful and convenient.'[2] What he discourses upon the question,—whether it is a sin to communicate with churches true as to essentials, but supposed corrupt in the exercise of discipline,—many of us will no doubt heartily concur with him in.[3] But it touches not the case of many more, who do not so much fear upon the account of the neglect of discipline, to be involved in the guilt of other men's sin,—as there seems to be little cause, that part being not incumbent upon us: nor, if *that* be his meaning when he speaks of *separating on a pretence of great purity*, is it the case with most of us: but we justly fear, and therefore avoid, to be made to sin ourselves, by having such things as we judge to be sinful imposed on us, as the con-

[1] Page 110. [2] Page 113. [3] Pp. 111, 112.

ditions of our communion. And as to this case, this reverend author speaks our sense in this last cited proposition, and pleads our present cause. Nor need we more to be said on behalf of it than what is reducible to that general proposition; or particularly, to that second thing, compared with the third, which[1] he says makes separation and withdrawment of communion lawful and necessary; namely, 'corruption of practice;' where we say as he doth, 'we speak not of practice as relating to the civil conversation of men, but as it takes in the *agenda* of religion; when unlawful things of that kind, are not only crept into a church, but are the prescribed devotion of it: those being required' (which he adds as an accession to the foregoing) 'as necessary conditions of communion from all the members of their church, which makes our withdrawing from them unavoidably necessary, as long as we judge them to be such corruptions as indeed they are.' And whereas he instances only in such things as belong to the head of 'idolatrous customs,' (suppressing what might be instanced under the other head, which he also there mentions, namely, 'superstitious practice;') yet we doubt not if other things also that appear to be sinful, besides idolatrous customs, be required as necessary conditions of communion, the case will be the same; unless we will distinguish sins into such as be lawful and such as be unlawful: or there be any that may be committed, that we may be admitted to the communion of this or that church!

Now, to reduce things to the method which suits the present case: if this reverend author do still judge, that where sinful conditions of communion are imposed, there non-communion is necessary; and those things be sinful to us which our consciences judge to be so, as he hath acknowledged: and again, if he still judge, that we are under an obligation to join in church society, so as to own our religion publicly and to partake of the ordinances and sacraments of the gospel; he must certainly account *that* our duty which he taxes in this sermon as our fault, at least till our con-

[1] Page 115.

sciences be otherwise informed,—whereof many of us have no great hope.

We are indeed not so stupid as not to apprehend there are laws, the letter whereof seems adverse to us. Nor are we so ungrateful, as not to acknowledge his majesty's clemency in not subjecting us to the utmost rigour of those laws; whom we cannot, without deep regret, so much as *seem* not in everything exactly to obey. Nor can it enter into our minds to imagine, that he expects to be obeyed by us at the expense of our salvation: or that it would be at all grateful to him, that being, as we are, unsatisfied in some things that are by the law made necessary to our partaking the privileges of the Christian church, we should become pagans in duty to him. His majesty was once pleased to give an ample testimony, by his never-to-be-forgotten gracious declaration of March 15th, 1672, how remote any such thought was from his royal breast; and though we humbly submit to the exigency of those reasons of state, from whence it proceeded that we enjoy not the continued positive favour which his majesty was then pleased to express towards us; yet we have no reason to doubt but his propensions are equally benign as they were.

Nor, though it be uncertain to us what laws they are, the authority whereof this reverend person relies upon to make our practice sinful, yet we hope he doth not mean to urge us herein with the laws of the civil government; because those as much forbid our non-communion—and under as severe penalty—for which he acquits us from the guilt of schism, or, if we endeavour satisfaction, from any sin imputable to us.

But if that should be his meaning, we desire it may be considered how unreasonable it seems, that the design of the law relating to that part of our practice which the Doctor in this sermon condemns, being declaredly to prevent sedition; they should take themselves to be meant who are conscious of no such design or disposition.

And again; that it is not with any reason, charity, or justice, to be supposed, that when that and other restrictive

laws were made, either the temporal ruin of so great a part of the nation as are now found to be dissenters was intended by the legislators, or the reducing them to the condition of heathens. But a uniformity in the worship of God, being in itself a thing really desirable, this means was thought fit to be tried, in order to that end. And so are human laws, about such mutable matters, generally designed to be probationary; the event and success being unforeknown. Whereupon, after a competent time of trial, as his majesty was graciously pleased to declare his own favourable sense and intention, so it is very commonly known that the like propensions were by common suffrage expressed in parliament; namely, to grant a relaxation. So that the law, being in its own nature nothing else but an indication of the legislator's will, we may account the thing was in substance done, so far as may satisfy a man's private reason and conscience concerning the lawgiver's intention and pleasure; though it were not done with that formality as uses—and is generally needful—to be stood upon, by them who are the ministers of the law. And that it was not done with that formality also, seemed rather to be from a disagreement about the manner or method of doing it, than about the thing to be done. And how usual is it for laws, without formal repeal, gently and gradually to expire, grow old, and vanish away, not being longer useful; as the ritual part of the Mosaical law did become an ineffectual and unprofitable thing! And how easy were it to instance in many other laws, the *letter* of which, they that urge these against the dissenters, do without scruple transgress, and from which no such weighty reasons do urge to borrow now and then a point! How many dispense with themselves in many parts of their required conformity, that have obliged themselves to it! "The priests in the temple transgress the law, and are blameless." Yea, and he that knows all things, and who is judge of all, knows how little scruple is made of transgressing the laws by gross immoralities and debaucheries. Men learn to judge of the sacredness of laws by their own

inclinations. Any that can be wire-drawn, and made by torture to speak against religion not modified *their* way, must be most binding: such as prohibit the vilest and most open wickedness, bind as the withes did Samson.

The sum of all this is, that whereas we are under the obligation of the Divine law to worship God in the use of those his ordinances which require to be dispensed and attended in society, and that we apprehend we cannot do it without sin in the way this reverend author invites us to; whereas also we do, with this author, deliberate whether Christ hath given any power to men to oblige us to the things we scruple, or disoblige us from the things we practise, and judge it unproved; we cannot but reckon the judgment the Doctor hath given in our case, 'that our practice is sinful,' is erroneous and indefensible by any man, but least fitly, of most other men, attempted to be defended by himself; from whom it would little have been expected that he should so earnestly recommend that very thing to us, as the only foundation of union, which he had so publicly told us in his preface to the 'Irenicum,' 'was, without controversy, the main inlet of all the distractions, confusions, and divisions of the Christian world; namely, the adding other conditions of church communion than Christ hath done.'

And though he hath lately told the world there are some passages in that book that show only the inconsiderateness of youth, and that he seems to wish unsaid, yet he hath not, that we know, declared that these are some of them. However, since this present determination and judgment of his against us is so peremptory and positive, as well as severe, let us, in the next place,—

2. Consider, and carefully examine, as we are concerned, what he hath performed in defence of it; and, it is to be hoped the inefficacy and weakness of his attempt therein will sufficiently appear. What I can find in his sermon hath any aspect or design that way, is either *ad rem* or *ad hominem;* and, to my apprehension, his reasonings, of the one kind or the other, are altogether unconcluding.

i. As to what may be supposed to be *ad rem;* if you look narrowly, you will find that the principal things alleged by him, that can, under that notion, give support to his cause, are only affirmed, but not proved. For instance, when he tells us, that the 'apostle supposed the necessity of one fixed and certain rule,'[1] etc.,—this had been very material to his purpose; if, first, he had told us, and had proved, the apostle meant some rule or other superadded to the sacred Scriptures: for then he might, it is to be presumed, as easily have let us know what that rule was, which most probably would have ended all our controversy; it being little to be doubted we should all most readily have agreed to obey it: or, secondly, if he had proved, that, because the apostle had power to make such a rule, and oblige the churches to observe it, therefore such church-guides as they whose cause the Doctor pleads, have an equal power to make other rules diverse from his, containing many new things which he never enjoined, and to enforce them upon the church, though manifestly tending to its destruction rather than edification. But these things he doth but suppose himself, without colour of proof.

Again, for his notion of churches,[2] examine as strictly as you will what he says about it; and see whether it come to anything more than only to represent a 'national church a possible thing,' and whereto the name 'church' may without absurdity be given. His own words seem to aim no higher. 'Why may there not be one national church from the consent in the same articles of religion, and the same order of worship?'[3] 'The word was used in the first ages of the Christian church, as it comprehended the ecclesiastical governors, and the people of whole cities. And why many of these cities being united together under one civil government and the same rules of religion, should not be called one national church, I cannot understand.'[4]

But can it now be inferred thence, that therefore God hath actually constituted every Christian kingdom or nation such

[1] Page 9. [2] Pp. 16, 17, 19. [3] Page 18. [4] Page 19.

a church? Can it further be inferred that he hath invested the guides of this church,—not chosen by the people according to Scripture, and primitive practice for some ages,—with a power to make laws and decrees, prescribing not only things necessary for common order and decency, but new federal rites, and teaching signs and symbols superadded to the whole Christian institution; with many more dubious and unnecessary things besides? and to exclude sober and pious Christians from the privileges that are proper to the Christian church as such, merely for that, out of conscience towards God, they dare not admit into their worship those additions to the Christian religion? to take order they shall have no pastors, no sacraments, no assemblies for worship? and because they will not be so much more than Christians, that they shall not be Christians at all?

He that would go about to make these inferences *merely* from the fore-mentioned ground, would gain to be laughed at by all sober men, instead of a conclusion, whatsoever better success he should have who should undertake to prove the same things any other way.

This reverend author was so wise as not to attempt either of these: but then in the meantime, what doth the mere 'possible notion' of such a church advantage his cause? Because it is possible, there 'might have been such a Macedonian, or such a Lydian church,' is such a one therefore necessary? and any other constitution of a Christian church impossible or unlawful? Or because the general meeting of magistrates of the whole city and people together in pagan Athens was called Ἐκκλησία, therefore such must be the constitution of a Christian church? And therefore such a church hath such powers from Christ as were above-mentioned?

Here, howsoever, we make our stand, and say that until the Doctor hath proved these two things, first,—

That such a church as he hath given us the notion of, as of a thing merely possible, is actually a Divine institution; and secondly,

That God hath given to the ecclesiastical governors in it, never chosen by the Christian community, or to any other power, to superadd institutions of the nature abovementioned and to enforce them under the mentioned penalties;—all his reasonings, that pretend to be *ad rem*, are to no purpose and do nothing at all advantage his cause.

Yet there are some passages in this part of his discourse, that though they signify nothing to his main purpose, are yet very remarkable, and which it is fit we should take some notice of.

As when he tells us what he means by whole churches; namely, 'The churches of such nations, which, upon the decay of the Roman empire, resumed their just power of government to themselves, and upon their owning Christianity, incorporated into one Christian society, under the same common ties and rules of order and government:'[1] as if there could be no 'whole churches' in the world that had not been of the Roman empire, or as if those of the Roman empire could not have been 'whole churches' without resumption of the civil government, as we suppose he means: or, as if—which he intimates[2]—we needed this so dearly espoused notion as a ground to acquit us from the imputation of schism, in our separating from the church of Rome; which certainly it were not for the advantage of the Protestant cause to admit: for then all that remain within the empire were bound to continue in the communion of the Roman church. And in the other kingdoms, where princes have not resumed their just right of reforming errors in doctrine and corruptions in worship, all should be schismatics that should separate from the church of Rome.

Again, when he would confute that 'great mistake,'[3] the making the notion of a church barely to relate to 'acts of worship,'—a mistake whereof I never knew any man guilty,—he surely runs into as great an opposite mistake, in making the notion of a church to be no more than of a society of men united together, 'for their order and government,' according

[1] Page 16. [2] Page 19. [3] Page 17.

to the rules of the Christian religion. Now faith and worship are quite excluded the notion of a church; and order and government,—and the rules of the Christian religion but as they refer to these,—only included. Whence it will come to pass, that we can have no notion of one Catholic church,—from which yet he argues at the bottom of the same page.

Nor, though I dislike the thing, do I understand the strength of the Doctor's argument against making the notion of the church barely to relate to acts of worship; namely, that 'if this held true, the church must be dissolved as soon as the congregation is broken up.' For will it not also follow as well, that if the notion of a church relate only to order and government, every time any meeting for affairs of order and government is broken up, the church is dissolved? and that an assembly of the states in any kingdom or nation cannot break up without a dissolution of the government; a parliament, at least, not adjourn or be prorogued without being dissolved? And whereas he adds, 'But if they retain the nature of a church, when they do not meet together for worship, then there is some other bond that unites them, and whatever that is, it constitutes the church:'—Is it not possible there may be such a bond for worship, as well as for government? an obligation to meet at stated times for that purpose, when they are not met? And then (if this were all that were to be said to the contrary) why might not *that* bond as well serve to constitute the church?

ii. But for his reasonings *ad hominem*, they need not detain us long. He argues from the judgment of the 'assembly of divines,' and others.

All which arguing must suppose, if it concern us, that we are bound to be of the same judgment with the ministers that are and have been so and so minded,—which I for my part understand not. But I perceive here his intention is, having endeavoured to draw us off from our ministers, now to move another stone, and try if he can draw them off from us.

For the 'Assembly,' I think it fit those that survive of

them should be as much concluded by what they then determined, as this reverend author by the 'Irenicum.' But I know no reason that such as they never represented, nor who ever pretended to be of their party, should be concluded to the world's end: nor do understand why even the same party may not be as well supposed in a possibility to vary from itself in forty years, as the same man from himself in less than twenty. If they did incline to deal too hardly with their brethren, that will not justify them who deal more hardly. It is hoped such as have been so inclined, have,—being smitten and 'having' suffered the rebukes of the Almighty,—repented it, and are become wiser: and when some think themselves grown wiser by prosperity, others by adversity, there is less reason to suspect the latter.

Yet also this reverend author ought to have considered the great disparity of the cases he would parallel. For when *one* sort of men are considering of having only such a frame of things settled, as are imposed by Christ himself, whether they judge rightly or no that he hath imposed every part of that frame, yet while they think and judge that he hath, and consequently that nothing is to be abated of it; it were very unfitly argued, that therefore *another* sort, professing to impose many things never imposed by Christ, should abate nothing of their unnecessary impositions.

For such as the Doctor quotes besides of the nonconformists, acknowledging the parish churches true churches, and the lawfulness of holding, sometimes, communion with some of them; it is not to be thought but among so many parties as come all under one common notion of dissenters from the public rule, (and whom that rule did not find *one*, but made them so in that common notion,) there must be great diversity of opinions, and proportionably differing practices in these matters. I heartily prefer the most moderate, as I believe you do. But here this reverend author takes occasion for so ignominious reflections upon our preachers, as insincere, dishonest, and unconscientious, as I doubt not, in one twenty years more, his ingenuity will

oblige him to repent more heartily, than ever it permitted him to do of his 'Irenicum.' Because he can allege a very few persons that have spoken to this purpose, therefore, first it must be represented to the world as their 'common judgment'; next, they are charged with concealing this judgment,—'why is this kept up as such a mighty secret in the breasts of their teachers?'[1]—and then it is endeavoured to make men think they practise against their own judgments in preaching to separate congregations.

Surely you and I are concerned, as we have occasion, to say what we truly can for the just vindication of our ministers. I doubt not but you believe, (and you have, for some, particular reason to be confident,) it is for our sakes they expose themselves to the displeasure of such men as Doctor Stillingfleet.

I must, for my part, say, 1. That I believe it to be the judgment of very few, that every parish is, as such, a true Christian church. I am sorry I have such a ground to fear it of one kind; namely, that some may not be so, as not having among them any tolerable understanding of the most confessedly fundamental principles of Christian religion. What say you to such, where the minister is grossly ignorant of the principles of religion, or habitually vicious and of a profligate life? Do mere orders make him a minister, who (perhaps since he received them) is become destitute of the most essential qualifications; any more than the habit, a monk? or a beard, a philosopher? Can a Mercury be made of every log? Not to insist that this reverend author can scarce think they are, from a ground of *another* kind, because they assemble only for *worship*, and not for *government*.

2. And surely a church may be unfit to be communicated with, although it be a true church,—those words of the reverend and worthy Dean of Canterbury carry their own light with them to this purpose,—'as a man may be truly and really a man, though he have the plague upon him, and for that reason be fit to be avoided by all that wish well to them-

[1] Page 37.

selves.'[1] It is true there are vastly different degrees of that unfitness. But I see not how *they* can apprehend there is the fitness which is simply necessary, who judge there are conditions of communion imposed that are sinful.

And I believe this reverend author will think it possible a true church may impose some sinful conditions of her communion; in which case, he hath determined a non-communion with her necessary and unavoidable.

3. For those that are of that judgment, the parochial assemblies ought to be communicated with so far as is alleged was declared. As I know none of the dissenting ministers that thought they ought *always* and *only* to be communicated with, so I see not with what pretence it can be said they keep up their judgment herein as a mighty secret. If it be so, how came this author to have it revealed to him? Is printing it to the world keeping it secret? Some have published it in that way, as we see is known to the Doctor; others, by their frequent discourses, and their own practice. And, to my observation, divers of them have in their sermons made it much their business to dispose the minds of their hearers to a truly catholic Christian union, as I have been much pleased to take notice some of the conforming clergy do also. But if this be the Doctor's quarrel with any of our ministers who think such communion lawful, that they do not constantly, in every sermon, inculcate the business of communicating in the *ceremonial* way; for my part I shall blame them as much as he, when once he hath made it very evident, that the *ceremonies* are more profitable, and likely to do more good to the souls of men, than repentance, the faith of the gospel, the fear of God, a good life in this world and eternal life in the other;—which I confess are the more usual subjects, so far as I have had the opportunity to observe, of their preaching.

And, let me add, that I can tell you of a secret, which some might be apt to think (as it is really so) is industriously and much more unrighteously kept up in one man's breast,

[1] Sermon on Joshua, xxiv. 15.

that may be conscious of a great design in it. The author of the book, entitled, 'The Weapon Salve or Irenicum,' seems to have found it some inconveniency to him to have been the author of so good a book; whereupon, in a certain soliloquy, though he is pleased to represent it as a 'Tripartite Dialogue,' he asks himself his own opinion of it, and gives himself this answer: 'I will tell you freely'—as you know men use great liberty in talking with themselves; though prudence would direct that to be done in some cases with great caution, and not to talk inconvenient things too loud, lest they be too much overheard—'I believe there are many things in it, which if Doctor Stillingfleet were to write now, he would not have said; for there are some things which show his youth, and want of due consideration; others, in which he yielded too far, etc.' Now here (though I believe he had begun to be inclined to throw away his *salve*, and use only the *weapon*, for the wounding of sound parts, not the cutting off the incurable, yet) I conceive one may safely enough take it for granted his intention was not to retract the whole book. But whereas he tells us not what he doth, how would the Doctor take it if one should ask 'why is this kept up as such a mighty secret in his own breast?' Or, say the tenderness of his mind might, it is likely, out of mere shamefacedness, keep him from declaring against what his own conscience tells him is truth; however, this retractation cannot make that which was true become false. The reason of things is sullen, and will not alter to serve men's conveniencies. Perhaps, indeed, his judgment is really altered. If therefore he would acquit himself like an honest and conscientious man, let him tell the world plainly, which be the pernicious principles of that book; that honest and conscientious men, who have thought well of many things in it, and perhaps the same things which he now disapproves, may not always be deceived by the shows of reason that deceived himself and by which he deceived them. The same justice that obliges not to lay a stumbling-block in the way of the blind, doth also oblige him to remove it who hath laid it: which is to be done, not by professing another

opinion; for we depend not on his authority, which he hath himself so much diminished, but on the reasons he alleged; which if they were fallacious, let him show wherein and answer his own reasons. To say the truth, the gravity and seriousness wherewith that book was written, appears to have so little of the youth in it in comparison of the jocularity and sportful humour of some of his later writings,—when he hath been discussing the most weighty and important cases of conscience,—that it seems as a prodigy in nature, and that he began his life at the wrong end; that he was old in his youth, and reserved his puerility to his more grown age. But we hope there is a great residue behind, wherein he may have opportunity and inclination to show the world that he did not repent the pious design of that book: or, at least, with a repentance that can, as well as that ought, to be repented of.

4. And whereas such of the dissenting ministers as have most openly declared for communicating at some times with some of the parochial churches, have also declared their judgment of the lawfulness and necessity of preaching and hearing, and doing other religious duties in other congregations also:—if now either the Doctor discern not the consistency of these things, or they discern not their inconsistency, is there nothing to be said or thought but that they 'acquit not themselves like honest and conscientious men'? Must it be taken for a demonstration of a man's want of honesty and conscience, not to be presently of the Doctor's opinion in every thing? or not to see every consequence which he sees, or thinks he sees?

But let us consider the goodness of this consequence, which it must be so great a piece of dishonesty not to discern. If it be the duty of *some* to communicate *sometimes* with *some* parish churches, (for this is the most the Doctor could make of that relater's concession, whom he cites,)[1] therefore it is the duty of every one to communicate with any parish church where his abode is, so constantly and entirely as never to

[1] Pp. 21, 22 of his Sermon.

have any communion with any otherwise constituted congregation!

This is the thing must be to his purpose inferred; yea and he would have it be from somewhat a lower premise. For he tells us,[1] 'That he dare say, if most of the preachers at this day in the separate meetings were soberly asked their judgments, whether it were *lawful* only for the people to join with us in the public assemblies, they would not deny it.' He surely dares not say that their meaning was, that it was lawful *constantly* to join with them in *all* their parochial assemblies; unless he dares say, what he hath not, from any of them, the least ground to think. Now hereupon he collects,[2] that our ministers 'cannot declare so much in a separate congregation' but this truth must fly in their faces: because he supposeth it repugnant to it, to preach at all in a separate congregation; and yet afterwards on the same page he so well agrees with himself, as to bid them 'if they would acquit themselves like honest and conscientious men, tell the people plainly that they look on our churches as true churches, and that they may lawfully communicate with us in prayers and sacraments.' And where are they to tell them so, but in the separate congregations? singly and severally he knows it were impossible. Nor do I think he would reckon honesty and conscience obliged them to come and tell the people so in their congregations.

Now I am afraid there are but a very few honest and conscientious men in the world at this day, if none are to go for such but who can perceive the strength and reasonableness of the above-mentioned consequence.

And that you may further see what reasons our ministers may have, notwithstanding all the alleged concessions, to administer in the worship of God in our assemblies,—though it were never so much their common universal judgment, that they and we might sometimes communicate in some of the parochial,—let us consider, that in the more populous and frequented places, as with you at London for instance, the

[1] Page 37. [2] Page 38.

churches cannot receive, some not a tenth part, some not half the people belonging to them; few can receive all. Methinks good men should not be offended that multitudes do in this distress relieve themselves by resorting to other places for necessary instruction. And though they be the inclinations of the people that divide them this way and that,—as it can be nothing else, though places for their resort be not everywhere most conveniently situate for their resort where there is most need; which must be taken not always where it were most desirable, but where they can be had,—yet they that have a mind, had better go to places at a more inconvenient distance than have no whither to go; and it is better the necessities of *many* should be provided for in such an exigency, than of *none*. In the meantime, the churches of worthy conforming ministers in such populous places are generally filled, as I have been informed, and have sometimes had occasion to observe.

Do not necessities of a much lower nature oblige us to recede from stated human rules? It is well known there is a law against relieving such as beg out of their own parishes. But if one find upon the road such a poor wretch ready to perish, am I not bound notwithstanding, if I can, to relieve him? And who would think, in such a case, I transgress the true intention of the law?

Yea, and God's own laws respecting rituals, common order, and the external part of religion, were by his own direction to yield to far less urgent necessities; to the plucking an ass or an ox out of a ditch; how much more the souls of men? "Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungered, and they that were with him, how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which it was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?" How expressly is it alleged by our blessed Saviour against those nice and punctilious observers and urgers of the letter of the law, the pharisees, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." And if he were willing to abate a sacrifice to himself, that there might be room for the

exercise of mercy towards men's bodies, how monitory and reprehensive should that be to such merciless persons as would have the very souls of men themselves be sacrificed to their stiff and unyielding humours! Positive laws cease to bind when, by accident, they thwart the law of nature; which binds to nothing more deeply than the endeavour of saving one's own soul, and—within the bounds of his calling—his neighbour's as his own.

What if many of our ministers think it *lawful*, and, at some times, a *duty* to join in some of the public assemblies? It is not *then* their duty, when an inviting opportunity and so urging necessities lay before them greater duty. This reverend author tells us, very pertinently to this purpose, when he was declaiming against us and our ministers:[1] 'It is a great fault among some who pretend to great niceness in some positive duties, that they have so little regard to comparative duties: for that which may be a duty in one case, when it comes to thwart a greater duty, may be none. This doctrine we learn from our blessed Saviour in the case of the obligation of the Sabbath; which he makes to yield to duties of mercy. And can we think *that* a duty lying upon us, which, in our circumstances, makes a far greater duty impracticable?' We acknowledge order and unity very lovely and desirable things, but we think it of greater importance that the ministers with whom such fault is found conduct men, though not in so accurate order,—which they cannot help,—to heaven, than let them go in the best order, yea, and as the case is, without any at all, to hell.

And what though the necessity of many of us arise from our own scruples, and what though those scruples were without ground, doth it therefore follow we must be abandoned to perish? when our very error, if we be willing to admit conviction—as we sincerely are, could the matter admit it—is not imputable to us for a sin. This author was once pleased to make it one of his proposals for accommodation;[2] 'That no sanctions be made, nor mulcts or penalties be

[1] Page 31.

[2] Irenicum, p. 64.

inflicted on such who only dissent from the use of some things whose lawfulness they at present scruple, till sufficient time and means be used for their information of the nature and indifferency of the things, that it may be seen whether it be out of wilful contempt and obstinacy of spirit, or only weakness of conscience and dissatisfaction concerning the things themselves, that they disobey. And if it be made evident to be out of contempt, that only such penalties be inflicted as answer to the nature of the offence': where he adds, 'I am sure it is contrary to the primitive practice, and the moderation then used, to suspend or deprive men of their ministerial function for not conforming in habits, gestures, or the like'; which he makes good, by following instances, beyond his own present contradiction. It is strange that for such like things *now*, it is thought so highly just, that our ministers are totally to be kept out of the ministry and we out of the church and way of salvation! Are these unproportionable penalties even where contempt appears? And what are they when, through God's mercy, there appears not the least colour of it?

Is mere scrupling a human device in the worship of God, and an inability to see with other men's eyes, and to mould and form our judgment and consciences as some other men can do theirs, a crime so inexpiable, that nothing less than our eternal ruin can satisfy for it? They know who have read the Turkish history, that mere scruple brought that necessity upon the garrison of Sfetigrade in Scanderbeg's days, that rather than drink of water which they thought polluted, they must either surrender or perish. If another possible way could have been found to supply them, was it fit they and the town should rather be lost than their unreasonable scruple be borne with? Or should they, in that exigency, be still held to it, to drink of that very water or none? We think we have greater reason to urge for our scruples; we think our necessity is greater, the case more important; and God deliver us from such pastors as will not think so too, and value souls at a higher rate.

Our case being thus, we apply ourselves to ministers, bound by their calling and office to attend the affairs of the souls of men; they are at leisure, have nothing else to do; they may not live idle and useless in the world. This is their proper business: whatever their opinion is about the things we scruple—and we believe it is mostly the same with ours—we see not how they can or dare deny us the help of their ministerial labours; we thank God that they dare not. And should they daily spend their pains upon us to urge us to the ceremonial way, as we believe they would do it very heartlessly, (wishing things to be in that respect otherwise in the Christian church, as well as we,) so would their labour in that kind be unprofitable, and therefore ungrateful to us. Nor do we think it needs any sort of 'mortifiedness' in them (as we find they are jeered under that notion) not to send us away unedified and grieved from their congregations, so much as a 'mortifiedness' in their love of souls and their sense of eternal concernments; wherein too many others, have attained to a great degree of mortification.

But now, my honoured friend, what think you of our cause? Let us seriously consider it, not according to the appearance which it will have to a captious sophistical wit, but as you will apprehend it to look in the eyes of our supreme and final Judge; considering also the same blessed Jesus as that mighty Redeemer and lover of souls, who "once suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring them to God." Bring the matter before Him, with whom you are to expect no tricks, but most plain and equal dealing. And bethink yourself, whether of these two things He will be more likely to have regard unto:—the saving of souls which He bought with his blood; or, the preserving inviolate certain human institutions and rules, confessed by the devisers of them not to be necessary to the being of the church; which common reason sees unnecessary to its well-being, to its external order and decency, evidently as great without them; which this author makes foreign thereto, when he tells us, 'that matters of order and decency are

allowable and fitting, but ceremonies properly taken for actions significative, and therefore appointed because significative, their lawfulness may with better ground be scrupled;'[1] and which experience shows to be destructive,—as whereby so great numbers, not only of His labourers are to be discarded, but of living, flourishing plants to be torn up by the roots, and all thrown out of His vineyard together?

For my own part, I must profess not to have the least doubt concerning the thing itself which we and our ministers do and practise; it is only our common great concern, to be very careful with what temper of spirit and with what design we do it. It should to the uttermost be endeavoured to be done with all meekness and humility, with all possible reverence to authority, abhorrence of the least real contempt, and unfeigned regret there should be any appearance of it, though never so unavoidable; with a design only to glorify God and promote the common salvation; not to make or serve a party, or advance any other interest than that of mere substantial Christianity and godliness. Let us covet this temper of mind; and, where we see persons of real worth, and of a true latitude and largeness of spirit commensurate to the Christian interest, that fall in with the public constitution,—value and love them nothing the less than if their judgments about these lesser things were never so exactly squared with our own; and so much more, by how much they may excel us in far greater and more valuable things. And if it be our lot to suffer under the notion of evil-doers for doing what we take to be our duty, let it be according to the Doctor's wholesome counsel, with an unrepining patience, and with much thankfulness both to God and our rulers that we have enjoyed so much tranquillity; and with that cheerfulness that becomes those that expect a blessed eternity, and to be translated ere long into a pure and peaceful region, where we are to serve God in society even with many of them who have been offended with us, without scruple or trouble to ourselves or them. If with such dispositions and

[1] Irenicum, p. 68.

aims we persist in our course, while our case is attended with such circumstances as now it is; I have no fear, I sincerely profess to you, of our acceptance with God, and, sooner or later, with all good men.

Upon the whole matter, I conceive the honest cause you were so deeply concerned for, is really unharmed, and I hope you apprehend it too; and that therefore your fear and despondency was causeless, as if it could not outlive this attempt against it by Doctor Stillingfleet. As you therefore see how capable it is of defence against him, I shall not forget the other part of my undertaking: but shall,

Secondly, say somewhat—as yours sufficiently lets me see there is cause—in his just defence against you. And really, sir, though that be an untoward thing to dispute against, I find it needful to defend him only against your anger; that is, the excess of it: which, although it can no more harm him than he hath done the cause, and consequently the blunting and breaking its edge (which is the thing I aim at) cannot advantage him, yet it will do him right; and,—which was the thing I first intended,—it will be an advantage and kindness to you.

I must here indeed tell you that I cannot blame you for being in some measure offended, as I can excuse the Doctor but in part. I do dislike, as well as you, two things especially, in his way of managing this business; namely, his too great acrimony and too little seriousness.

For the former; it is too evident, and I heartily pity him for it, that he should so forget, and suffer himself to be transported beyond, the rules of Christianity and prudence; neither of which would allow him, (and I am sure within the compass of the former, his text would not), so to make himself a standard to all other men, as to suppose no man can be honest or conscientious that is not of his mind in the matters he then undertook to controvert, or that should not judge of the connexions of things as he did. I cannot think it hath added to his reputation to reflect so grossly before such an assembly, upon a whole party of men that are, many of them,

well known in the world; and who, in point of integrity, are so little liable to be suspected, that an attempt to blemish them upon so slight a pretence and, in matter of fact, so untrue, could not but recoil upon himself; especially with them that shall impartially compare their inducements to prevaricate with what *he* hath.

And for the other; it were indeed to have been wished that upon so grave and solemn an occasion he had forborne jests, especially of that nature; as for instance, 'such mortified and conscientious men,' and 'the most godly—can least endure to be told of their faults,' etc.: which expressions, any one that considers his *scope*, will understand to be ironical; and that considers the *matter*, to be somewhat bold ironies; and the *occasion*, to be causeless ones: inasmuch as it is not impossible, that truly mortified and conscientious men may desire opportunities to do God service in the world in a way that he dislikes. And it may consist with real godliness not to count all those things faults which he takes to be such. And indeed, in his 'Dedication,' his way of averting the report of 'those ill men,' that 'he intended to stir up the magistrates and judges to a persecution of the dissenters,' is, to any considering man, sportful and ludicrous; namely, offering them only such a way of escaping persecution as whereupon a man may shun suffering, if he please, from any party of men in the world as such,—by being in everything of their mind and way: but which in effect grants the charge which he would avoid, that if we will not be so united to his party, we were to expect nothing but utmost rigour. One would rather have thought he should have bedewed that discourse with tears, which had in itself most manifestly so awful and tremendous a design, as not only the devoting of so great numbers, that might possibly not be convinced and persuaded by him, to a temporal ruin, but the depriving them of the ordinary means of their salvation: and that, if he thought it necessary for the preserving of order in the church, they should be so dealt with, he should have spoken of their case with the

greatest compassion and tenderness, not with derision and contempt.

Yet I would have you use lenitives with yourself and calm your own spirit; and I wish you were capable of contributing anything to the moderating and pacifying his too: that though he have been angry unprovoked, and with a sort of men that have ever respected and honoured him, as if he had been of themselves; his anger that hath been without *cause*, (as you know perhaps who in a like expression blames the exorbitancy of another passion,) may not also be without *end*. At least, I pray you take heed you do not deserve the like sharp repartee which the cynic met with from that noble philosopher,—that 'he taxed his pride with greater pride'; that you exceed not the heats whereof you complain. If he will still retain his fervour, let him be angry alone; and his displeasure have its continuance, with as little influence or concomitancy of yours—and I could wish of any other man's—as, for aught I know, it had its beginning; and that since he thinks 'of being a sacrifice,' he may only burn gently in his own flame, which he may moderate as he please, and I hope will seasonably extinguish before he have suffered much harm by it.

For the qualifying of your own *too great resentment and offence*, I would have you consider how great reason you have to believe that this blow came only from the (somewhat misgoverned) hand of a pious and good man. Be it far from you to imagine otherwise. If you think he was to blame for intimating suspicions of their sincerity whom he opposes, make not yourself equally blamable by admitting hereupon any concerning his: which would argue a mean narrow spirit, and a most unwarrantable fondness of a party, as if all true religion and godliness were bound up in it.

And if it look unlovely in your eyes to see one of so much avowed latitude and enlargedness of mind, and capable upon that account of being the more universally serviceable to the Christian church, forsaking that comprehensive interest, so far as to be engulfed into a party upon a private and distinct

basis, consider what aspect the same thing would have in yourself. And never make his difference with you in this matter, a reason to yourself of a hard judgment concerning him; who can, you must consider, differ no more from us than we do from him.

Believe him, in the substance of what he said, to speak according to his present judgment. Think how gradually and insensibly men's judgments alter, and are formed by their converse: that his circumstances have made it necessary to him to converse most for a long time, with those who are fully of that mind which he here discovers; that his own real worth must have drawn into his acquaintance the best and most valuable of them, and such for whom he might not only have a kindness, but a reverence; and who, therefore, must have the more power and influence upon him, to conform his sentiments to their own.

We ourselves do not know, had we been by our circumstances led to associate and converse mostly with men of another judgment, what our own would have been. And they that are wont to discover most confidence of themselves, do usually but discover most ignorance of the nature of man, and how little they consider the power of external objects and inducements to draw men's minds this way or that. Nor indeed, as to matters of this nature, can any man be confident that the grace of God shall certainly incline him to be of this or another opinion or practice in these matters; because we find those that we have reason to believe have great assistances of Divine grace are divided about them, and go not all one way.

We may indeed be confident that had the *same* considerations occurred to us which have, we should have been of the same mind and judgment that we are. But it is very supposable that some accidental occasions might possibly have happened, that might hinder our actual taking up such considerations, though the things to be considered were not unknown to us: and not *that* only, but that might prevent our knowing even matters of fact, that have signified not a

little to the determining our judgments that way which they now incline to.

And I do particularly believe,—as I doubt not but God is graciously present with those that in the sincerity of their hearts have chosen to serve him in the way which the law prescribes,—so that if Dr. Stillingfleet had known what proofs there are of that same gracious presence in these so much censured meetings, his thoughts would have been very different of them from that they are. I do not speak of proselyting men to a party, which I heartily despise as a mean and inconsiderable thing: but have known some and heard of many instances of very ignorant and profane persons, that have been led, perhaps by their own curiosity or it may be by the persuasion of some neighbour or friend, to hear and see what was done in such meetings, that have (through God's blessing upon so despised means) become very much reformed men, and, for aught that could be judged, serious and sincere Christians. And whereas some, that have very prejudicial thoughts of all that frequent such meetings, may be apt to suspect all effects of that kind to be nothing else but illusions of fancy, or a disposition at least to enthusiasm, or an artificial and industrious hypocrisy; I am very confident that if the Doctor had had the opportunity frequently to observe and converse with such,—as we have had,—and heard the sobriety and consistency of their discourse, and seen the unaffected simplicity, humility, and heavenliness of their conversation, he could not have allowed himself the liberty of such hard censures, but would have judged of many such persons as you and I do.

Upon supposition of all which, I make little question but it would have been very remote from him to wish that so many persons had rather lived in sin and perished for ever, than have been brought to repentance and a good life by being now and then at a separate meeting.

So that for the *substance* of what he hath said against such meetings, we have reason to impute it to his judgment; and his judgment to such circumstances, very much, as I have

mentioned, that have led him the way he hath taken; and not given him opportunity to know what might have begot a better opinion in him of the way which he opposes.

But for the *manner* of his treating of this subject,—that I impute to the prevalency of some present temptation; and hope he did not express in that sermon his habitual temper: and am highly confident,—notwithstanding what he hath said in it,—if it were in his power, we might even safely trust him to prescribe us terms, and should receive no hard ones from him.

Somewhat it is likely he was expected, and might be urged, to say to this business; and his own thoughts being set a work, fermented into an intemperate heat, which, it is to be hoped, will in time evaporate.

If I may freely speak to you my own thoughts, he seems to deal in this business, as one that forced himself to say somewhat. For though I apprehend he speaks his judgment, yet the expressing it in this time and manner he might regret. And because it might appear a becoming thing to him to seem earnest, the temptation prevailed with him, against his habitual inclination, to supply with sharpness the defect of reason; which the poverty of the cause afforded not. For really his reasonings are faint, unconcluding, and unlike Dr. Stillingfleet. So that if any expected this performance from him, one may think—and this ought in some part to excuse him—that, besides some little flourishes of his reading and wit, he seems only to have lent them his name: which however I pray you let still be of great value with you. And turn your displeasure into serious earnest praying for him, and that his spirit may not be further harmed; that, amidst his many temptations, he may be delivered and preserved from being at all puffed up or any way embittered; and that so valuable a person be not lost, or in the least degree rendered less useful to the church of God: and that all that know his more inward conversation, may discern in his frequent savoury discourses, in his continued serious calling upon God in his family, in his readiness to do good, especially

to the souls of men, in his aptness to condescend to those that are much beneath him, how great the efficacy is of Divine grace; and that, through the power of it, a great measure of wit, learning, applause, and secular advantages, may not only consist with vivid godliness and sincere devotedness to the interest of religion, but contribute abundantly to the service and diffusion thereof in the world. I am very serious in this advice to you: nor, thanks be to God, have so low or profane thoughts of prayer (which hath ever borne so great a part in the religion of all times, nations, and sorts of men) as to think it will signify nothing; especially when the design of it is not mean and private, but such wherein all good men will unite.

I little doubt, but if ever there shall be good days and a happy state of things on earth, a factious zeal for parties will become a contemptible thing; and all the discriminative accretions to religion, which are severally scandalous to all other parties except their own who embrace any sort of them —too probably for the sake of some secular interest or other, which is hoped to be gratified and engaged thereby—will be spontaneously quitted and abandoned by all parties, from an overpowering sense and grateful relish of substantial religion itself; that is, entire devotedness to God and the Redeemer, with the joyful expectation of the blessedness of the other world: and so all become one.

But is this to be done while we sleep and do nothing? Or have we, in our circumstances, anything to do by which we may hope to contribute so much towards it, as by prayer? By this means (if men of sincere and pious minds did, with universal and abstracted aims, apply themselves to this great duty) we are to reckon the blessed spirit of holiness, love, and peace, would be more and more drawn into consent. Do you your own part herein; you will find your own present advantage by it. It will fill you with good thoughts, hopes, and expectations; the kindly benign influences whereof will pleasantly qualify and temper your spirit, and make you know how much more grateful an inhabitant that charity is,

"which thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," than frowardness, discontent, vexation, and anger, at any one that thinks and speaks otherwise than you did expect or wish. Insist upon such things in prayer, as wherein it may reasonably be expected good men shall generally agree with you. You have the more reason to expect being heard; yea, and ought to hope the spirit of this person, whom you have taken such offence at, will be rescued out of temptation and be drawn into full consent with you. For you have no cause to doubt but that he hath those principles wrought into the temper of his mind, which need only resuscitation, that they may dispose him to union with the whole body of sober and serious Christians of his own way or of others,—whensoever that can be seasonably endeavoured for,—upon more probable and hopeful terms than he hath proposed in this sermon. Therefore be you serious and fervent in requests to this purpose, as you have that love to God and his church which you profess; and that value for this worthy person, which I reckon you still ought to have: or (if that can be fit to be added) any kindness for,

Sir,

Your affectionate servant, etc.

Since my writing these pages, I hear of answers to the Dean's sermon, which, in so remote a corner, I have had no opportunity to see; what is here written may therefore, upon comparing, be communicated or suppressed, as shall be thought fit.

And so I should take leave of you, but that it may be needful, whereas I have principally considered in these papers the case of such as think it unlawful to join in the public assemblies, to add somewhat—whomsoever it may serve—in reference to their case that think otherwise. For

to say the truth, this is *here* the more common case: and though the Doctor believes they that frequent the separate meetings, do generally judge it unlawful to join in the public; howsoever it is with you,—and it is likely the Doctor speaks of what is more within the compass of his own knowledge, or theirs who inform him,—it is with *us* in this part of the country quite contrary. And I may truly say, that in this place, and others where I have sometimes occasionally been, the generality of them who come to the other meetings do also attend the public.

Now these may perhaps think themselves left under blame, and may apprehend the Doctor's consequence is strong against them,—that if *occasional* communion be lawful, *constant* communion must be a duty: which he, no doubt, understands exclusively of any distinct way of communion.

And if indeed they judge that consequence strong, I would fain know what hurt they can think it doth them? Why should any man be afraid of his *duty?* Or of the *truth* which makes it known? And, if hereupon, they can, with the satisfaction of their own consciences, waive all other opportunities of worshipping God with others of his people, they have the less to do: and why should they complain who are satisfied?

But in short, either they apprehend such other additional means a real necessary help and advantage to them, or they do not. If they do *not*, they have no cause to trouble themselves, nor to grudge that so much is said for others; whose, for aught I know, may, as the Doctor thinks,—for I cannot make an estimate from this or that little spot,—be the much more common case. If they *do*, they have little reason to be concerned about the Doctor's consequence: which I must wonder if he himself can think strong. It hath not, you see, been altogether overlooked in the foregoing discourse: and if any feel themselves wounded by it, he is so great an Achilles, that they may have their wound and healing from the same hand.

For, as hath been noted from him in his preface to the

'Irenicum,' he seems plainly to intimate, that men have no charter, or grant of Divine power, to make other conditions of church communion than Christ hath made. If so, then the conditions by which this way of communion is distinguished from the other, supposing they be lawful, are still, in themselves matter of liberty, not of duty: and so it is left to the prudence of a Christian to determine him, as in all all like cases, this way or that; as will make most for the common good, consistently with that of his own soul. That is sin or duty, which in this or that case, will do more hurt or good. There being no particular rule to guide a man's practice, he must have recourse to that general one: by which it may be my duty, upon some great reason, to do that at *one* time, which, for as great reason, I ought not to do in a continued course. And it is highly commendable, when a Christian understands the latitude which the law of Christ hath left him; is, in his own spirit, exempt from servile restraints by other *imagined* bonds; and can with a generous liberty, pure from base self-respects, turn himself this way or that, as shall make most for the service of the ends he lives for. And when any accordingly use that liberty, it is a fancy of none but half-witted persons, to think they must therefore addict themselves to this or that party.

If a man's case come to be so stated, that he hath reason to apprehend it will do more good than hurt to others, that he own a sort of Christians, who have particularly modified themselves otherwise than they needed by any divine injunction or by any that God hath empowered men to put them under,—by communicating with them under the common notions of *Christians* only, not as *so* modified; he doth but express the genuine complexion of a truly Christian spirit. But he is not to do so in a *continued course,* if he find it will be a real damage to his own soul, in comparison of another way that he finds more edifying. Perhaps if he will be religious, only after the mode of this or that party, his fare may be either too fine or too coarse for his constant diet. I may, besides my own inclination, drink a single glass of

wine out of civility to one person, or of water to another, when I am not, for any man's pleasure, to destroy my health by tying myself to drink nothing else. And whatever Christian condescendingness and goodness of temper may prompt a man to, who makes not what others *do*, but what they *ought* to do, his rule and measure; they have least reason to expect much compliance from others, who bind themselves up within their own party, are enwrapt as leviathan in his scales, call themselves *the* church—as many say 'here is Christ and there is Christ'—and call all men separatists that will not be of their church. And perhaps they assume and appropriate the name with no more pretence or colour and with no better sense, than if a humorsome company of men should distinguish themselves from others by wearing a blue or a yellow girdle, and call themselves mankind! Do not too many in our days distinguish their church and Christian communion, by things no more belonging to a church or to Christianity, than a girdle of this or that colour to human nature? And which no more qualify for Christian society, than that doth for human? If, however, an ingenuous, free-spirited man, out of respect to his present company or for any other valuable reason, should in such a case put on the blue girdle, I shall find no fault with him. But if any should go about to pinch him too close with it, so as would be inconvenient to his ease and health, or oblige him to protest against the *true* humanity of all that neglect it, I doubt not he would throw it away with scorn. Much less would he be a confederate with them that use it, if they professedly combine for the destruction of the rest of mankind that use it not, when many of them that refuse it apprehend it a real grievance; especially when they that would impose it, live, with many of the rest, under the government of a just and sovereign prince, from whom they have no charter for their imposition, but who hath declared he will not have his subjects so imposed upon.

In sum, we are all indispensably obliged by our Lord Jesus Christ, the sovereign prince and ruler of his church, to the

substance of all Christian ordinances. As to uninstituted modes thereof, we are free. And they that understand their liberty, may use or not use them as is more for their own and the common good. They that understand it not, and think themselves under an obligation from Christ not to admit questionable, devised additions into their worship; they are not therefore to deprive themselves of the substantial ordinances of the Christian religion, whereof there is no question.

I shut up all with the words of the great apostle,[1] "One believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; for God hath received him.[2] Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."

[1] Rom. xiv. 3, 4. [2] Ver. 13.

SOME CONSIDERATION

OF A

PREFACE TO AN INQUIRY

CONCERNING THE

OCCASIONAL CONFORMITY OF DISSENTERS,

ETC.

CONSIDERATION OF A PREFACE RELATING TO OCCASIONAL CONFORMITY.

I HOPE your public challenge, Mr. *Prefacer*, as you only allow me to call you, was given with an honest intention. Yet with what kindness or equity you could make your first onset in the view of the world, by hiding your own name and exposing mine, designing yourself to fight in the dark and expecting me to do it in open light, I leave to your own, perhaps calmer, second thoughts.

I might hereupon, as I promise myself, be justified in the opinion of competent and impartial judges, if I had disappointed you in not writing; but I am apt to think I shall disappoint you more, in what I shall write upon this occasion. Yet not at all for this reason; for I thank God, I hold no opinion which I am ashamed to own to the world; but for what is with me of far greater weight.

I have, for a long time, had an habitual aversion in my own mind, from perplexing myself or disturbing others by being concerned in agitating the controversies that have been on foot, about the circumstantials of our religion. I hope it will offend nobody, if I recite somewhat of what I wrote almost thirty years ago, in the epistle prefixed to a treatise on 'Delighting in God;' namely, thus:

'I have reflected and considered with some satisfaction that this hath been my way and the temper of my mind among you;[1] namely, to recommend the serious practice of

[1] The inhabitants of Torrington, magistrates and people, to whom this discourse was dedicated.

the great things of religion which are known and least liable to question, without designing to engage you to or against any party of them that differ about circumstantial matters. Great reason I have to repent that I have not with greater earnestness pressed upon you the known and important things wherein serious Christians do generally agree; but I repent not I have been so little engaged in the hot contests of our age about the things wherein they differ. For, as I pretend to little light in these things, (whence I could not have much confidence to fortify me unto such an undertaking,) so I must profess to have little inclination to contend about matters of that kind.

'Nor yet am I indifferent as to those smaller things that I cannot discern to be in their own nature so. But though I cannot avoid to think that course right which I have deliberately chosen therein, I do yet esteem that but a small thing upon which to ground an opinion of my excelling them that think otherwise, as if I knew more than they. For I have often recounted thus seriously with myself, that of every differing party, in those circumstantial matters, I do particularly know some persons by whom I find myself much excelled in far greater things than is the matter of that difference. I cannot, it is true, thereupon say and think everything that they do; which is impossible, since they differ from one another as well as me: and I understand well, there are other measures of truth than this or that excellent person's opinion. But I thereupon reckon I have little reason to be conceited of any advantage I have of such in point of knowledge; (even as little as he should have, that can sing, or play well on a lute, of him that knows how to command armies or govern a kingdom,) and can with the less confidence differ from them or contend with them; being thereby—though I cannot find that I err in these matters—constrained to have some suspicion lest I do, and to admit it possible enough that some of them who differ from me, having much more light in greater matters, may have so in these also. Besides that, I most seriously think, humility,

charity, and patience would more contribute to the composing of these lesser differences, or to the good estate of the Christian interest under them, than the most fervent disputes and contestations. I have, upon such considerations, little concerned myself in contending for one way or another while I was among you; or in censuring such as have differed from me in such notions and practices as might consist with our common great end or as imported not manifest hostility thereto: contenting myself to follow the course that to my preponderating judgment seemed best, without stepping out of my way to justle others.'

This was long before, and hath been ever since, the constant temper of my mind in reference to matters of this kind. I have contented myself by the best means I could be furnished with, and the best use God enabled me to make of them, so far to form and settle my judgment as was absolutely necessary to my own practice: not taking my measures from what I was to hope or fear, of worldly advantage or disadvantage, reputation or disreputation; but in what way, as my case was to be circumstanced, I might walk most agreeably to the common Christian rule,—the holy Word of God,—and best serve the proper ends of life; do most good in the world, and, as my calling obliged me, most promote the common salvation. And that judgment, once formed, and preponderating to the way I chose, I have endeavoured faithfully to follow. Herein my heart reproaches me not, and I hope, shall not, as long as I live.

In the meantime, I have abstained from censuring others who have taken a different way. I have rejoiced in the seriousness and success of any such, in their ministerial work, and in the liberty they had for public service, which I had not. I usually pray for a blessing upon their labours, as upon my own. My converse hath been as free and pleasant with divers of them, as with others that were entirely agreed with me in circumstantial matters. Nor have I felt any inclination in my mind, to controvert with them the matters of difference between us, but have even, in our converse,

forgot that we differed,—having no more cause to suspect hurt from them than they from me. Where is the man that can say, I ever persuaded him to conform or not to conform?

This disinclination with me to controversies of any such kind, hath proceeded from sundry reasons. My judgment was already so far settled in these things as was necessary to my own practice. I reckoned an unproportionable measure of the short time we have to live in this world, was not to be taken up about them; that it consisted not with a man's designed progress towards his end, to be always or too long inquiring about his way; that disputes of that kind have little savour in them, compared with the great, agreed matters of our faith and hope. I was loath to disquiet others, or cast stumbling-blocks before them, who seemed as well satisfied in their way, as I was in mine. I observed such altercations seldom better men's spirits, but that often they make them worse. I had a great reverence for divers that differed from me in these things; I knew several of them to be much superior to me, in all sorts of more valuable knowledge; as also I did of them that therein agreed with me. Comparisons I thought odious and vain. I could not be of every worthy and good man's mind, when they were not all of the same mind. I had enough, I thought, to satisfy myself in reference to my own practice, not enough to change theirs; or enable me to set up to be a decider of such controversies. It was remote from me to think sincere religion, either confined to any party, distinguished by these little things, or excluded from any; that "the kingdom of God" consisted not in them, but "in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." I have thought, that as things that were most necessary were most plain, so things that were so very little plain were the less necessary. Those particles of matter must have very little of real entity in them, that escape the *acies* and discerning of the finest and quickest eye. I have hardly known any point in metaphysics or scholastic divinity disputed with greater niceness and subtilty than our controversy about the ceremonies; and though I never

thought myself to be any of the quickest in the art of disputing, yet I think, taking which side I will in this disputation, I could easily puzzle the most of plain people, and that are but of an ordinary understanding, about them; much more easily, than I could convince or satisfy them—or perhaps, did myself—the one way, or the other.

The matter were indeed easy, if, for instance, in a select gathered church,—of one or other whereof I suppose you are, —one conscience, or a few men's, would serve for the whole body; or by parity of cases, of a whole parish or nation. But when we consider that "every one must give an account of himself to God;" and that in matters which concern our own duty Godward, we are no more capable of having it done by another for us, than (as a noted person in our time aptly speaks) 'of being represented by another in the day of judgment;' this will bring the matter with weight upon our own spirits, lest we should be found "transgressors in Bethel," and to have offered "strange fire" instead of a "sacrifice," on the one hand; or needlessly, on the other hand, set on fire the temple itself.

This will in God's time, I doubt not, be considered by such as can make the occasion cease, of such difficulties. In the meantime, it is of great consolation to those that sincerely fear God, that if with upright minds they principally study to approve themselves to him, and, if they mistake, do only err for fear of erring; he will not with severity animadvert upon the infirmity of a weak and merely misguided judgment.

It is a most sure truth, and worth all this world, that to an honest unbiassed heart, it is a far easier thing to please God, than men.

I have also considered, that some that can contend fervently and conclude positively concerning church power, where it is lodged and how far it can extend; in making rules and inflicting censures; discover too often more confidence than knowledge and solid judgment, in those very things themselves: but much oftener, little of the spirit of Christ and the gospel; little of that meekness, humility, charity, that

are most essential and inward to true Christianity; and are too apt to magnify the "tithing of mint, anise, and cummin," above "faith, mercy, and the love of God."

I have sometimes thought that to be somewhat instructive which is storied of Plato,[1]—that having one in his academy that had great skill in driving a chariot with that exactness as not to swerve one jot from the lines on which the wheels were, very swiftly, to move, nor could be satisfied until he had prevailed with that great man to be the spectator of his performance herein; he was so far from applauding him, that turning away with contempt, he said, 'They that mind, with such exactness, little things, will never mind great.'

I detract nothing from the exact care, that ought to be had in observing God's own revelations and injunctions, if you understand aright under what notion and for what ends he intended them. Nothing is to be thought little in religion, that truly belongs to it. But, sir, if you should take upon you to devise rules and measures of your own, and then put a sacredness upon them; yea more, insist to have them observed with greater strictness and for more distinguishing purposes, than ever God intended divers of his own revelations for; this I must tell you were bold and extravagant. And how you are concerned herein, we shall see in the progress of this discourse.

To come somewhat closer to you therefore, Mr. Prefacer, I shall first consider how reasonably and justly you offer to engage me in this quarrel; and this will lead me on to take a view of your treatment of that honourable person against whom your quarrel is more principally meant.

As to your endeavour to involve me in this affair: I think before you had offered at it, you should have been well assured of these two things; at least of the one or the other of them. 1. That I really did concern myself to advise, one way or other, as to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of that 'occasional conformity,' about which you contend. 2. That I ought to have done so.

[1] Æl. Var. Hist.

If neither of these can be made to appear, I cannot but think it was a distemper of mind, an immoderate 'scripturiency,'—or what shall I call it?—too great an affectation of intermeddling beyond any call you had, that could lead you to it. And whereas you think you have not exceeded herein the rules of charity or good manners,—as to the point of *manners*, I will not take upon me to be your judge; I believe you guess me to be no master of ceremonies. But as to the much greater business of *charity*, I must talk with you more about that, before we part. For it is a matter of much greater compass: and in your measures and exercise whereof, the generality of serious Christians are concerned as well as I. But as concerning myself, can you make either of these appear?

As to the former, I am sure you cannot, nor any man. Nor ought you to have presumed it, unless you had been sure of the Second: That I *ought*. I, for my part, judged I ought *not*. Whether I did truly judge or no, that leads into the main cause that will lie between us, wherein I shall be no less cautious than you; though therein I shall not so far compliment you, as to pretend I more follow your example in it than my own inclination; that is, I shall not undertake to determine whether the action, (as circumstanced,) of that honourable personage you principally reflect upon, were lawful or unlawful. This I meddle not with; and you pretend to decline it too,—either you, or the author you recommend and follow, which is all one to me; namely, the question whether this or that communion be lawful or unlawful; but are so little true to that pretence, as to judge that person who occasionally partakes in the legally established church's communion, unfit, ever after, to be received otherwise than 'as a penitent' to any other Christian communion. And I think no man is to do the part of a *penitent* but for what was unlawful or a fault.

Now I, for my part, shall not take so much upon me as to determine,—not being called, if I were never so competent,—whether there were anything faulty in that action or no: but

in this I am neither in doubt, nor without a sufficient occasion to declare, that I can judge it no *such* fault (if it be one) as should exclude one, that in all other respects appears a serious and an orderly Christian, from any other Christian communion to which he may have thought fit to adjoin himself.

And that I may set in view the ground for my not judging otherwise, and for the following discourse, we must distinguish,—

1. Of the obligation of precepts negative and affirmative, or against sins and unto duties; namely, against or unto such things as, by those precepts, become sins or duties.

And of these, I shall speak only so far as concerns our present purpose, that is, as they are to come under consideration *in foro ecclesiæ*, or in a visible church of Christ. And so, there are sins consistent with the Christian state; and there are sins inconsistent with it, or destructive of it; duties that are matter of simple precept, and duties that are also conditions of Christian communion. We are also to distinguish the obligation of negative and affirmative precepts, as it is usual and common; namely, that the former bind (unless the precept were repealed) *semper et ad semper*, *always*, and *to every point of time:* the latter, *always*, while the precept stands in force, but *not to every point of time.* Of this we shall make the proper use, in the fit place.

2. Of the different notions under which, or causes for which, men of different sentiments or persuasions, may decline the communion of this or that church:—namely, some may decline the communion of this or that church, as judging it essentially defective; so as not to have in it the essentials of a Christian church. Whether that judgment be right or wrong, true or false, is not now the question, or under our present consideration.

Others may decline it, as judging it defective in respect of some accidentals or circumstances; either simply considered, or compared with some other Christian church that they may apprehend to come nearer the Christian rule; and

wherein the administration of Christ's ordinances may be more profitable and tend more to their advantage and benefit in their spiritual concernments.

These distinctions we shall consider severally, both by way of explication and application to the present case.

1. For the former. When we speak of sins consistent or inconsistent with the Christian state; of duties that are merely such; or that also are required as necessary to Christian communion, we intend the distinction as referring to visible Christianity: and mean, that as there are sins inconsistent with visible Christianity, avowed atheism, open idolatry, infidelity, apostasy,—total, or in respect of some or other known fundamental of Christian religion,—contumacious and continuing rebellion against the authority and known laws of Christ; which without visibly serious repentance and reformation slur and deface a man's character, as a visible Christian:—

So there may be faults that do it not, which may yet come under common notice or view. I only instance in what is more agreeable to our present case;—as misjudging in some circumstantial matters—and very disputable—that are extra-essential to the substance of Christianity, and practising according to that erring and mistaken judgment; even though the mistake be continued, never discerned, and never repented of or reformed as long as one lives.

Such were the differences in judgment and practice about meats and days,[1] etc., wherein there could not but be right and wrong. Both sides could not be in the right, that is, referring their practice to their judgment. The question being, whether such and such things were lawful or unlawful, and that the one side judged them lawful, the other, unlawful; the one side must be in the wrong. The things about which they differed could not be both lawful and unlawful. It must be sin to judge and do amiss; duty to judge aright, and practise accordingly. And what was now to be done in this case? Were they to excommunicate and

[1] Rom. xiv. 2.

curse and damn one another? Some that presided in the Christian church did, it is true, in process of time, come to use an unchristian severity in such cases: as when some tied themselves to the eating of herbs only, and abstained from flesh—whether they derived their opinion from the school of Pythagoras, or however they came by it, matters not—and it was determined concerning them, (I could show where and when, were it needful,) that if they would use abstinence upon *other* considerations, they might; but if upon a judgment or opinion that the eating of flesh was unlawful, they should be excommunicated. And this was thought a sufficient reason for that hard censure,—because they denied Christ to have given that liberty, as to meats, which he had really given. But was this according to the mind of God? No, quite contrary; we see it otherwise determined by apostolical authority: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations;"[1] the case follows. The charge is, "'receive him," take him into your communion, and dispute not his doubting judgment with him, or pass you no judgment upon it so as to vex or disquiet him with it. Let him alone with his judgment and practice together; but *receive* him. And the forementioned rigour we find to have been corrected in after-time.

And the like charges are elsewhere given in reference to the differences between the Jewish and the Gentile Christians, the circumcised and the uncircumcised; that is, that in the Christian state, no distinction was to be made of Jews or Greeks, circumcision or uncircumcision, them that used or disused the Jewish rites and ceremonies; but all were to be esteemed as "one in Christ Jesus," or "Christ to be all in all" among them;[2] that is, God makes no difference, supposing they be good men, sincere Christians, or become "new creatures"; he stands neither upon their being circumcised or uncircumcised,[3] retaining or quitting the subsequent Judaical observances; so tenderly and by so gentle a hand, did the

[1] Rom. xiv. 1. [2] Gal. iii. 28; Col. iii. 11. [3] Gal. vi. 15.

Divine wisdom and goodness draw off the Judaizing Christians from those things whereof he designed the total abolition; whereof they had more pretence to be tenacious, being things enjoined by God himself. Therefore God treats them with more indulgence. And what example should we rather choose to follow? especially, what indulgence doth the case itself challenge, in not pressing, under penalty, what there can be no pretence of Divine authority for? And we find this is the measure according to which we are to go, in receiving persons into our communion. We are to *receive* such as we have reason to think *God receives;* in the forecited,[1] "Do not judge, but receive him, for God hath received him."

There are therefore two plain rules laid down by that great apostle, in reference to such dubious and small matters; namely, one concerning such scrupulous persons themselves, that they "be fully persuaded in their own minds,"[2] and do nothing against the judgment of their own consciences, in those matters,—which he enforces:[3] the other concerning the carriage of fellow-Christians towards them; that they *judge* them not, but *receive* them.[4]

Whereupon, Mr. Prefacer, I conceive myself clear in *not* judging. And you will be clear in judging, if not only you are an abler judge—which I will never dispute with you—but also that you were called to judge; and that your judgment is most assuredly true:—if God have authorized you, and revealed to you, not only what was right or wrong in the case itself, but the secrets of his heart whom you judge; and that he practised what he thought to be wrong; that is, that he is a hypocrite, and that he hath against his conscience yielded to do that for an unprofitable preferment, probably to his great loss—as some have found it—which he himself thought unlawful:—if you know him to be of so vain and light a mind, that, not for any real advantage, but for a little temporary, evanid honour and gaiety, he hath offered this violence to the judgment of his own conscience:—if God revealed this to you and charged you to proclaim it to the

[1] Rom. xiv. 3. [2] Ver. 5. [3] Ver. 23. [4] Ver. 1—10.

world; then hath He indeed set you over him, and far above him; placed you in a much higher seat of judicature than that wherein he is seated; dignified you with an authority superior to what He ever conferred upon any apostle, or on the whole Christian church, or on any besides His own Son.

But if there be nothing of all this, then, though your judgment should happen to be true, yet if it were without any ground upon which you could know it to be true, and so it were only right by chance; if it were without call; if you had nothing to do with the matter; if it come among the exempted cases reserved by the great God to his own tribunal, and which he hath subjected to no ecclesiastical nor human cognizance,—being, as to the matter itself, very minute, not so much as a doubtful action, but the *circumstance* of an action, and that touches not any vital of religion; as to the *lawfulness* of that circumstance, disputable; a ceremony; one of them that were not less disputed, by men of excellent wisdom and piety on both sides, than the Jewish ones in the time when they were matter of controversy to the Christian church; and after all that disputation, determinable, for aught I know, chiefly by the *majus* or *minus bonum ecclesiæ*, (as in the time when that Jewish rite of circumcision was the occasion of so much disquiet to the primitive Christians, St. Paul circumcised Timothy, for the greater service of the Christian interest,) and being, as to the inward intention, motive, and inducement, secret, and liable only to the Divine view:—then, I say, upon all this, even supposing the thing you censure were faulty, yet it is no such fault as can slur the character of a man otherwise appearing a serious Christian. If the contrary were duty, it is no *such* duty as is necessary to entitle a man to any Christian communion. Yea, and I add, your censuring it, as you do, is a thousandfold, even unconceivably, more faulty. And if you could truly say, as Diogenes did, trampling upon Plato's rich bed, '*Calco Platonis fastum*,' '*I tread upon Plato's pride*,' it might more justly be replied, as the latter did reply, '*Sed majori fastu*,' 'But you do it with greater pride.' You take upon

you to invade the throne of the Most High; and may take that as said to *you*, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? Why dost thou judge thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ."[1] And I wonder you did not dread those awful words, of that very Judge,[2] "Judge not, that ye be not judged;" and shall more wonder if yet you perceive not, when you thought a "mote was in" another's "eye," that there was a "beam in your own;"[3] a thing that among heathens[4] has been animadverted on with just severity. Nor shall I re-charge you in the following words, "Thou hypocrite!"—for I know not your heart in this matter; but I would have you re-consider, with how little warrant you have broadly charged that worthy person your quarrel is about, with hypocrisy; that he acted against his own conscience, because he acted not according to yours: as if yours were to be the standard, and the conscience-general to mankind!

But that you may apprehend it not impossible for a man to follow the dictate of conscience, and perhaps as good a one as yours, though he do not follow yours; I shall yet have recourse to a second distinction, before laid down, namely, between the different notions under which, or causes for which, men of different sentiments may decline the communion of this or that church; namely, some, as thinking it essentially defective; others, as judging it defective in some circumstances only.

Now, sir, if any man decline the communion of what is, however, vulgarly called a church, as counting it really no church at all, his withdrawing or abstaining from its communion must be total and constant; he can have no communion with it, as a Christian church, at all.

But if one avoid more ordinary communion with a church, as judging it, though not essentially defective, yet to want or

[1] Rom. xiv. 4—10. [2] Matt. vii. 1. [3] Ver. 3.

[4] Cum tua pervideas oculis mala lippus inunctis,
Cur in amicorum vitiis tam cernis acutum,
Quam aut aquila, aut serpens Epidaurius? . . . . *Hor.*
(And many others of them abound with like passages.)

err in some circumstances, so considerable as that he counts another church comes nearer the common Christian rule, the Holy Scriptures; and finds its administrations more conducing to his spiritual advantage; he may be led, by the judgment of his conscience, both, sometimes upon weighty and important reasons to communicate with the former, and continue therein, according as those reasons shall continue urgent upon him; and yet, sometimes, as the cessant or diminished weight of such reasons shall allow, to communicate with the other.

They that will not admit of this distinction, thus generally proposed, as a ground of such different practice in the general as is here expressed; but judge not only essential perfection, but a perfection by the concurrence of all desirable accidents, to be necessary also unto Christian communion, can have no communion with any Christian church on earth; for where is any to be found every way perfect?

It is true that accidental defects may be more or less, and it requires great accuracy to apply what is here generally said to particular cases; nor shall that be my present business: I have somewhat else of greater importance to do. All that I concern myself for, is only to have it considered, that a man of conscience may, upon the grounds generally mentioned, vary his communion, as hath been said, while he keeps himself within the limits of a Christian church essentially true, and that hath no additions destructive of that essence. And if he mistake in making application hereof to a particular case, it proves him not to be a man of a profligate conscience, or of none at all.

He may have arguments so specious, that, supposing he err, may impose upon the judgment, and thereby direct the practice of a very intelligent, discerning, and upright-hearted man; so as to make him think that which is perhaps an error, his present duty; and so not offer violence to his conscience in what he so doth:—as, *for example,* judging such a church true as to essentials, he may think (occasion inviting) he hath greater reason, though it be

defective in accidents, to communicate with it sometimes than to shun its communion always; since those Christians that agree in all the essentials of Christianity, agree in far greater things than it is possible for them to disagree in. He must have mean and misshapen thoughts of Christian religion, that thinks not the great doctrines of faith, ordinances of worship, and rules of daily practice common to us all, unspeakably more valuable than this or that external mode or form of religion, that is but accidentally and mutably adherent thereto. And what if some have thought *that* alone a sufficient reason for their occasional communion with a church, with which they have not constant communion, that they may do it and themselves that right before the world, as to testify they decline it not as no church; but so far practically own it, as the reason of the thing requires: why may they not be supposed to do this, as thinking it a good reason, whether it really be so or no, without going against conscience herein?

And yet the same person may perhaps think the communion of another church preferable, and, for ordinary resort, rather to be chosen; as wherein he finds the same *essence*, with more regular, grateful, and advantageous modes and ways of administration.

And if hereupon it should be said, 'But since, sir, you think it not unlawful to communicate with such a church sometimes, why should you not, for common order's sake, do it always?'

May he not reply, 'Pardon me in that, good sir, if I think I owe more to what I take for Christ's rule, and to the discernible advantage of my own soul; judging, in these respects, *that* communion to be best, which I more constantly adhere to.' I say, why may not an honest well-meaning man reason thus, and do accordingly,—whether his sentiments herein be right or wrong,—without gainsaying his own conscience? and the rather, for that the church itself with which he more ordinarily communicates not, as comprehended in the states of the realm, so far gives him the liberty of his choice

as to reckon his doing herein what is more for his satisfaction and advantage, no punishable thing. Why may he not conscientiously say, 'Let me be excused, if I do not compliment away things that are, to me, of so great importance? and which they to whom I give it, cannot but count a profane sort of compliment?'

Question. But should not the latitude of a Christian carry him to fix his communion with the larger and more extensive church?

Answer. What? should the latitude of a Christian bind him to one sort of Christians, with exclusion of all other? Never was that noble principle of true Christian latitude more perverted or turned even against itself, than if it be used to train men into a religious bigotry! As if the apostle's professing "to be all things to all men," "to the Jews as a Jew," etc., must signify that he take one side, and engage with the Jews against the Gentiles! They that refuse confinement to the largest church may avoid it, not because they should otherwise express too much latitude, but too little.

Some may here, perhaps, say: 'What one judges best ought to be chosen always.'

And indeed nothing is more easy or ordinary than for them that have little compass of thought, to pronounce hastily and conclude peremptorily, even "beyond seven men that can render a reason."

How would such a one stare, if one should oppose a downright negative to his confident assertion, and say: 'What is best, in matter of practice, is not to be chosen and done always?' It is not enough to justify such a choice and practice, that it be in itself or simply best; but that it be best in present circumstances, and all things considered that *ought* to be considered in the present juncture.

Let here another distinction be remembered, before laid down. Negative precepts oblige to every point of time. Affirmative do not so. He that is always under obligation to pray solemnly, is not obliged to be always solemnly at prayer.

The worship of God is better than most actions of our lives; yet the saving of a town or house from fire, yea, the plucking of a sheep or an ox out of a ditch, is sometimes to be preferred. The most sacred, external act of duty becomes a sin, when it excludes that which is more a duty at *that* time. How fatal, how totally destructive an error might it have proved, before, to the Jewish nation, always to have thought it unlawful to defend themselves on the Sabbath-day![1] How long was sacramental obsignation in the wilderness omitted! How much more may attending upon such an institution in what some may think a more eligible manner, if there be a reason that outweighs; when, not the substance of the ordinance is wanting, but what is counted (perhaps by you) a fitter *modus?*

To be plain with you, Mr. Prefacer, suppose you judge kneeling at the Lord's table, a sin, (as cautious as you are, not to seem to take this or that side in these controversies, wherein you however unwarily betrayed yourself, as hath been noted, yet my supposing it doth you no hurt,) and suppose you judge another gesture a duty; suppose you judge concurrence in the use of the Liturgy, a sin, and the unprescribed way by human authority, a duty; yet who hath empowered you to make such sins, if they were such, exclusive from Christian communion? or such duties, conditions of it?

Sometime, surely it will be understood how bold an adventure it is, to make terms of Christian communion, which Christ hath never made.

There are sins and duties, immediately by God's law itself, that he never intended to be so characteristical; namely, of the unfit or fit subjects of Christian communion. For what? hath God forbidden any to be admitted to Christian communion, but such as are perfect in knowledge and holiness? How bold a self-assuming then is it in you, not only to make sins and duties which God hath never made so; but also to make them distinguishing terms of Christian communion, which is far higher, and the more insolent usurpation!

[1] As it was once said to have been; Plutarch *de Superst.*

You know, or it is meet for you so to judge, that many pious men dare not partake of the Lord's supper otherwise than kneeling. And I have been sufficiently assured concerning divers of eminent sanctity, that they have been as greatly affected, and had as high elevations of soul, in the use of the Common Prayer, as others in any other way of devotion.

Now, Mr. Prefacer, ought another man's gust to have been the measure of theirs? Would you have these men excluded from all Christian worship, namely, in society with Christian worshippers? To say, 'Let them worship God with those of their own way,' is to say you know not what. For if (as by your rule it seems to be determined) the things are unlawful, and exclusive from all Christian communion in worship, there ought to be none of any such way, that they can worship with. And now, sir, if *that* be your conscience,—that supposing there be never so many thousands in a Christian nation that cannot worship God in your way, you would have them paganized, made as heathens and publicans, —God bless me from your conscience! And shall this be your way of recommending yourself to Christian communion? Wheresoever such a spirit appears of zeal against such and such external forms,—or if it be *for* them, it is all one to me, —of pride and self-esteem for so contemptibly little things; of malice and cruelty, that they could persecute even to the death, if it were in their power, or into "strange countries," such as differ from them in things of no greater moment: I would sooner be of a fellowship with drunkards or other sensualists,—though I hope God will keep me from both,— than with them; as much, as I count a devil somewhat a worse thing than a brute. Nor can it be said, that herein Satan is transformed into an angel of light; his transformation is, at least in this, very inartificial. He apparently enough shows himself to belong to the darkest region. And whereas some such may talk of offering "strange fire," because it comes not from their altar; their fire is as much stranger than Nadab's and Abihu's, as common unconsecrated fire differs from infernal.

You will say, 'These human forms and other devices they are so much set upon, are sins.' Sins? But I ask, do they unchristian a man? They will be much more over-magnified by so fervent opposition, than by serious use.

But what would I do in such a case? would I not reject a man from the Lord's table, how serious soever, that would not communicate otherwise than kneeling? No, God forbid! Let him use his own freedom; and be "fully persuaded in his own mind;" he shall not offend me. And though there was a time when Christians were forbidden kneeling at all on the Lord's-day, I had rather that human institution were neglected, than any good man debarred of so useful an ordinance.

I should never quarrel with any man for that gesture itself. But I should like no one's choice of it the better, that should pretend to choose it for a *moral* reason; for instance, as expressive of greater reverence: because a moral reason must immediately bind conscience, and is of universal extent; must equally concern all; whence, this would imply an accusation of all other Christian churches that use not this gesture, as irreverent or less reverent than they *ought* to be. Nor can there be any other measure of *debitum*, or of that which ought to be, but some law or other; nor can there be any law of universal obligation, but by an universal Lawgiver: this would therefore insinuate an accusation of our Lord himself of neglect, in not making such a law, and in allowing a different gesture to his disciples, when he first appointed that ordinance. For though their gesture was not sitting, it is more probable to have been such as was used in those times and countries for their ordinary table-gesture. And this other I should use, being in communion with those that use it, rather not to offend them, than please the master of the house, or to satisfy my own conscience, as if it were in itself a sin not to use it. But for them that use it on that account, that is, of conscience towards God; I should, according to the mentioned rule, not "judge," but "receive" them.

And whereas some may think it would introduce confusion into the church, that all should not be confined to one gesture

in such an act of worship, it would be a worse confusion to have serious Christians, because their conscience obliges them to kneel, when others do not, mingled with Turks and infidels. Nor is that oneness of gesture more necessary to any order that is itself necessary, than that all that partake together in such an ordinance, be of one stature, size, or sex; or wear all garments of the same shape or colour.

I hope for a time when Christianity will be the religion of the world. While it is cramped it will never grow. I hope it not to prevail in the world, by having all the world in every minute thing reduced to the model of this or that party. How absurdly arrogant would he be, that should pray that all the world might be of one mind, by being all brought to be, in every nice punctilio, of *his* mind! When I see partition-walls taken down, truly Catholic Christianity coming into repute, a readiness and promptness of mind "to be all things to all men," in the apostle's true meaning: when the great things of religion do more engage men's minds, and they cease to magnify trifles; when, as to faults, real or supposed, men no longer "strain at gnats and swallow camels;" when the love of God comes to govern the Christian church, and reign in the hearts of men; then will the "kingdom of God come with power." For I am sure the spirit of love is the "spirit of power, and of a sound mind."

In the meantime, I declare myself (as I have often) to be of no party self-distinguished by so little things. Nor, when the visible church of Christ on earth comes to be confessedly composed, as of old, only of three sorts, catechumens, penitents, and the *fideles*, with their infants, can it be any great or insuperable difficulty, whom we are to receive into our communions, and whom we are to exclude.

And thus, Mr. Prefacer, I have said all I intend as to the main of your cause; that is, whether they that shall not be of your mind when such a case occurs to them as that about which you litigate, and shall practise otherwise, that is, shall not please you, should therefore, except they repent, be excluded all other Christian communion? I shall

say no more to it, except what may occasionally fall in, upon my giving some short remarks as to the manner of your treating such worthy persons, whose judgment and practice agree not with yours.

Herein, because I never intended to answer your book,—thinking what I have said makes that needless,—I shall only note some passages from it here and there.

And I begin with the *title-page;* where, I pray you inquire of your own heart, what you meant by that suggestion, 'in cases of preferment.' Was it not to insinuate, that 'preferment' was the *inducement* to that worthy person, to act against his own conscience in that case? when it was his known judgment, testified by his practice several years before! Herein you should have *been sure.* You meddled with a two-edged weapon, wherewith you vainly aimed to wound him,—for a sincere conscience is invulnerable,—but have most certainly wounded yourself. You may in time feel the wound; it is worse while you do not. If he can sincerely appeal to the Searcher of hearts, as for aught you know, he can, 'Lord, thou knowest this man hath wronged me!' I would not have such an appeal lying in heaven against me for all the world! How can you tell but that such a thing was designed and done with a sincere aim and intention of mind?

Among heathens it hath not been unknown that some, having honorary coronets conferred upon them, consecrated them to their gods.[1] Is it impossible somewhat like it should be done by a Christian to the true and living God? Are you so much a stranger to a devoted life as not to think this possible?

You have wronged him, when, without ground, you judged otherwise: but you wronged the great God infinitely more, whose throne you presumed to usurp.

And you should have been able, before you concluded with so rash confidence, to prove the act in its circumstance unlawful. If it were lawful, go among them you thought to

[1] Athen. *Deipnos.* cum animadvers. Is. Casaub.

gratify, and inquire who of them will think a consequent preferment could make it unlawful? Therefore your insinuation, except wherein it is spiteful and mischievous, is idle and vain.

Again, your subjoined text of Scripture, "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal"—for what purpose was it set there? What? to signify that the God of the dissenters and of the Established Church, differ as the living God and Baal? Did you take this for a piece of wit? It was uncharitable. Uncharitable? that is a trifle in comparison; it was profane and most impious wit: yet you are mighty fond of the conceit, and we have it over and over in the book, that the conformists and dissenters serve two Gods,—as the one of them is miscalled,—and have two religions! 'The Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem,' and as truly the congregations of England, to place his name in them, and whom, as invocated in many, and, for aught appears you intend, in most of them, you blaspheme as a senseless idol,—rebuke, and forgive you!

This may occasion some idle people to cry out, 'What! at church in the forenoon and at a meeting-house in the afternoon! This is fine! and what will now become of our religion?' And what is, already, become of *his* religion who so exclaims? Do the religion of the church, and of the meeting-house, make two religions? Wherein do they differ? The substance of the same religion is common to them both. Therefore the modes and accidents, wherein only they differ, are this man's religion. And can any man be the better for such a religion that consists of modes and accidents?

It is true that religion may possibly be so ludicrously disguised and misrepresented, as scarce to be fitly owned for any religion at all. But this cannot be said of most, if of any, of the congregations of England, of either sort. And they that have anything of charity or the fear of God about them, will be very wary how for a misplaced word or indecent action or expression, they censure one or another of these two

sorts of solemn worshipping assemblies, as having nothing of God or true religion among them.

Thirty-nine articles are given us for the summary of our religion, and of what is thought to appertain to it. Thirty-six contain the substance of it, wherein we agree; three, the additional *appendices* about which we have some difference. With such a man, the three weigh more than all the thirty-six. And if his eyes and understanding were usable things with him, he would see the church is a meeting-house, and the meeting-house a church. How remote are these men from the temper of spirit *they* were directed to be of, that had far greater differences among them than ours, to count themselves "all one in Christ Jesus!"

But throughout the book, such as are of this Christian latitude and benignity of mind towards one another, and not so stingily bigoted to a party as he, are treated with this sort of charity,—to be styled '*painted hypocrites*,' such as '*play bo-peep with God Almighty;*' that, (if such an occasion offer itself to any of them, to serve God and their country in a public station, *and they* do what the law requires, and which they think they may sinlessly do in order to it,) 'do trespass upon their consciences,' and 'damn their own souls to serve their country.' And they that censure them not, as he doth, are induced to forbear it, only by their 'gold ring or fine apparel!'

And he would have all such as use that liberty which their consciences and the Divine law, as they think, allow them in order to their serving God and their country, to be disfranchised, and made incapable of doing public service to either; that is, for doing that which as wise men as he count indifferent; and which can therefore make no one either a better or worse man or Christian: and would draw that odium upon the Established Church, to represent it as if it sought to engross all power to itself, as such, even in civil affairs, upon so insignificant a pretence! than which he could not attempt doing it a greater mischief, or more directly tending to make it intolerable to the prince, nobility, gentry, and to the whole body of the nation itself.

No such arts need to be used to expose the clergy to the ill-will of the people, and raise, in nobler minds, what some may count a just and generous disdain of being so enslaved. The nature of man, in his lapsed state, is so alienated from God as to have little regard for any sacredness of persons and things, by which only they become related to him.

The Church of Rome hath not gained much upon kings and princes, of later years, by affecting to make them dependent on her: and it is not difficult to pre-apprehend, what may at length engage them against her, to her final ruin: that is, to make them "hate her, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire." In that church, this caprice first began in their *dominium temporale in gratiâ fundatum;* and thence by a strangely wide sort of stride or skip, even of a heavenly width from pole to pole, it was got quite among another sort of men; treading antipodes to the former in the immodest, rude claim and appropriation to themselves, of the entire privilege and prerogative of the 'saints' reign.' It is the easiest thing in the world, when any sort or party of men have got power into their hands, to saint themselves and unsaint all other men, at their own pleasure.

But do the civil rights of men depend upon such, that is, so easily abusable, pretences? We are saying nothing now of their rights claimable from God himself, but from one another; and even such rights none could have,—that is, that are claimable from their fellow-creatures, or their *concives*, fellow-members, under any government,—but by some original grant one way or other conveyed from the supreme Ruler, who is the fountain of all rights.

But hath he ever given Christians or saints as such, a right to seize the rights and properties of other men?

The notion of the 'saints' reign,' because we find it in the Holy Bible, is not to be torn out, but must have its true sense assigned it. And if there be a time yet to come, wherein it shall have place; it must mean, that a more general pouring forth of the Spirit shall introduce a supervening sanctity upon rulers as well as others: not to give

every man a right to rule,—for who should then be ruled?—but to enable and incline them that shall duly have a right, to rule better. And so the kingdom will be the saints', when it is administered by some, and for others, who are so.

If God have allowed to men, as men, any rights, that is, that are claimable against other men; and should again give a right to Christians in other men's properties; to what a strait and distress were the rest of the world reduced! Might not any of them say, Since one must be a man before he can be a Christian, what am I to do in this case? Must I unman myself and lose the rights I have, as such, that I may recover them by being a Christian? I had them as a man before, sufficiently to secure me against the claim of all others: what! but not against Christians? Then are they an unmanned sort of men; and whereas obligations accompany rights, what lawless men are these Christians!

But whereas God hath, in great compassion to the world, appointed it to be Christianized, he hath with equal wisdom chosen the fittest methods for it; that is, not to commission Christians to divest other men of their all, unless they become Christians; but to let men see Christianity had no design to disturb the world or disquiet them in their former possessions, though they should *not* be Christians; but that they might enjoy them with higher advantage, if they be, in order to another world.

If God had made Christianity the measure of civil rights to mankind, his sovereignty were not to be disputed; but he never exerts acts of sovereignty but by the direction of his wisdom.

Wheresoever the sound of the Christian name comes, if it carried that avowed principle with it, that Christians, as such, had a right to out all other men of their birthrights,—instead of becoming the religion of the world, nothing could more directly tend to engage and inflame all the world against it, and make them endeavour its utter extirpation as a thing intolerable to mankind. Nor could they have any so plausible pretence against it besides, having nothing in

itself but what must render it most amiable and self-recommending. Did the Spaniards' methods for Christianizing America, recommend the Christian faith to that miserable people?

And if God himself would never give such a power for introducing the very substance of Christian religion itself, how intolerable must it be for any sort or church of Christians to claim and use it for the introduction of their own additions to Christianity, as the Church of Rome hath notoriously long done. And time will show the event, as common reason doth the tendency of it.

And, sir, though the strain of your discourse shows your no great kindness to this Established Church, the compliments which here and there you bestow upon it too broadly show as if, under a colour of kindness, you would tempt it to aim at loading itself with such a weight of power and greatness as, you may think, must finally sink it.

Its more real friends, our civil rulers, are more wisely kind to it, and give it no more interest in the civil government than it may more safely bear: they never exact in order to any one's having a share therein, a total, constant conformity to all its rites, as you would have them: and have only designed by the limits they have set, the excluding that sort of men, whose known principles make them more incapable of human society than mere pagans.

But especially, it is not to be let pass, that you or your author industriously represent the primitive English Puritans, —concerning whom it were in some respect well for you, if, as the great author you mention, speaks, 'your soul were with theirs,'—as if they were generally of your stingy, narrow spirit. I wonder how you could think to impose upon the world in a matter of so recent memory. This attempt had been more prudently deferred till three or four ages hence; especially if great care had been taken, in the meantime, that all books were burnt or buried, that give any account of them. How notorious is it, that generally they that continued in their native land, as far the greater

number did, looked not upon the Church of England, as no church; that they wished her more reformed, but in great part kept in her communion, their principal leaders and the people taking other opportunities of spiritual improvement, as they could; for which they often ran great hazards. In '62, the same spirit and sentiment afresh appeared; when most of the considerable ejected London ministers met, and agreed to hold occasional communion with the now re-established church,—not quitting their own ministry, or declining the exercise of it as they could have opportunity. And as far as I could by inquiry learn, I can little doubt this to have been the judgment of their fellow-sufferers through the nation, in great part, ever since. How could you have the confidence to represent this as a new thing and an apostasy from primitive Puritanism, that hath so much in it of the spirit of primitive Christianity; such largeness of mind; such reverence of what bears any Divine stamp and signature upon it, undefaced; such benignity, even towards them by whom they suffered! How strangely inverted, sir, do things lie in your mind! Must we accordingly transpose the names of virtue and vice? And by how much more illustrious any render themselves by the eminent *virtues* of pride, fury, self-conceit, censoriousness, to the damning of every body that in all things do not think and do as they,—are these things with you characters of the most excellent sort of Christians?

If I had seen anything in your book that needed or deserved a particular answer, I should not have baulked it. But seeing nothing that looks like reasoning but what is so idly sophistical, that any one of common sense can see through it; such as that: 'How can a man dissent and conform at the same time?' when all the world knows, or may, conformity consists of numerous parts; and is it such a miracle for a man to conform in some part and not in every part? conscientiously to scruple constant entire conformity, and not scruple *some* part of it, at *some* time? If any think such talk needs further answering, let them seek it elsewhere.

And for your replying, I shall not prescribe to you; only I can assure you that thereby neither you nor any man else shall divert me from my much more important, pleasant work; unless I see somewhat that shall make it worth my while.

The person you criminate, may yet, notwithstanding what you have said, be in the right for aught I see. And therefore to any such, whose case this is or may be, I can only say that their rule having been consulted with serious diligence, as I hope it hath; and their end a secret between God and them, which, if it be sincere, is enough for them; they have no cause to be discouraged, but go on and prosper.

But, Mr. Prefacer, if your judgment upon the case itself, be true, I conceive that truth, accompanied with your temper of spirit, is much worse than their error.

ANNOTATIONS

ON

THE THREE EPISTLES GENERAL OF JOHN.

ANNOTATIONS ON THE THREE EPISTLES GENERAL OF JOHN.

THE ARGUMENT.

Concerning the penman of the First Epistle, it doth not appear there hath been any doubt, the ancients generally ascribing it to the apostle St. John. The time of his writing it is uncertain, some assigning to it an earlier, others a later date. It is thought to have been written directly to the Christian Jews, not living in Judæa, but remote in Parthia, where it appears great numbers of them resided; being styled by a noted father, 'The Epistle to the Parthians.' The design of it is to confirm them in the great fundamental doctrine of Christianity, that our Lord Jesus was the Messiah, against the attempts of divers apostate or degenerate Christians, who—whether this epistle were of the former or latter date—did in his time deny, or essentially deprave, that most important article: and not only to induce them all most steadfastly to believe it, but to impress it more deeply upon their souls, to reduce the more licentious, to raise and quicken the dead and carnal to a more strict, lively, vigorous Christianity, and—which is greatly inculcated—to excite and inflame mutual Christian love among them, as that which would more strongly fortify them against the endeavours of seducers, and render their communion more pleasant among themselves. The other two epistles are very much of the same argument,—though the latter hath somewhat of a different and peculiar concernment,—but doubted by some whether by the same penman; upon very insufficient grounds, the matter and style plainly enough showing them to be this apostle's.

THE FIRST EPISTLE.

Chapter I.

Ver. 1.—That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.

The order of discourse requires we begin with the last thing in this verse, "the Word of life." This phrase, "the

Word," is by this apostle, (not here to inquire in what notion some, both Jews and pagans, before took it,) familiarly used to signify the eternal Son of God. And whereas this is his usual style in speaking of this sacred person,—as in the entrance of his Gospel, (so very like that of this epistle,) so often over in his Revelation,[1] and that afterwards in this epistle itself[2] he so readily falls into the mention of him by this name, as not doubting to be understood,—it is scarce to be supposed, that being so constant to himself herein, he should use the same form of speech without any such intendment in this place, where the circumstances do both allow and invite us so to understand him. Nor doth the addition to it here, "the Word of life," render it the less fit to be applied to this purpose, but rather the more; as serving to denote the peculiar excellency of this Word, that he is the living and vivifying Word; whereupon he also styles him in the following verse simply "the Life," and "that eternal Life," (which is fit to be noted here, namely, that these three expressions, "the Word of life," "the Life," and "that eternal Life," do, by the contexture of the discourse, plainly mean the same thing, and seem in their principal intendment to be set down as so many titles of the Son of God;) designing to represent him as the original and radical life, the root of the holy, divine life, to all who partake thereof: agreeably to his own words concerning him in the Gospel,[3] "In him," namely, the Word, "was life, and the Life was the light of men,"—that is, the Word was a vital, enlivening light; and[4] "He," namely, the Son of God, "is eternal life;" and to our Lord's words of himself, "I am the life,"[5] and that "the Father had given him to have life in himself,"[6] and consequently to be capable of being to others an original or fountain of life. Yet whereas by "the word," and "the word of life," is often signified the Gospel,[7] it seems not incongruous or disagreeable to this context, to understand the apostle as designing

[1] Chap xix. 13. [2] Chap. v. 7. [3] John i. 4.
[4] Chap. v. 20 of this epistle. [5] John xi. 25; xiv. 6. [6] John v. 26.
[7] 1 John ii. 5; Phil. ii. 16, and elsewhere.

to comprehend both the meanings together in one expression, apt enough to include them both.[1] Nor are they of so remote an import, considered in their relation to us, as not fitly to admit of being both intended at once: the Son of God being his internal Word, the Word of his mind, his Wisdom, (another appellation of him frequent in Scripture,)[2] comprehending all ideas of things to be created or done,—to us the immediate original of light and life, and by whose vivifying beams we are especially to be transformed into the Divine likeness; the Gospel being his external word, the word of his mouth, the radiation of those beams themselves; —as we do ourselves first conceive, and form in our minds, what we afterwards utter and express; only whereas our thought, or the word of our mind, is fluid, and soon vanishes, God's, in whom is no change, is permanent, consubstantial and co-eternal with himself: "The Word was with God, and the Word was God."[3] Neither are these two senses of "the Word of life" less fitly or with more impropriety comprehended together under that one expression than in common discourse. Speaking of the sun in reference to ourselves, we often comprehend together in our meaning both the body of the sun itself and its beams; as when we say, it enlightens us, revives us, shines in at this window or upon that dial, we do not intend, as reasonably we cannot, to exclude either, but mean the sun doth it by its beams. And now the notion being settled of "the Word of life," (which was necessary first to be done, and which required a larger discourse,) we may the more easily perceive how what is here said of it may, in the one sense or the other, be applied thereto. "That which was from the beginning:" So the living Word in the first sense was,—namely, when all things also began,—which is not said itself then to have begun:[4] "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and," at the next step, "the Word was God." And with what is said by this Word himself,—then taking another, but an

[1] See Dr. Hammond *in loco.*
[2] Prov. viii. and elsewhere.
[3] John i. 1.
[4] As John i. 1.

equivalent name, the "Wisdom" of God:[1] "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old: I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was: When," etc., "then I was by him, as one brought up with him," etc.:—where "from the beginning," and "from everlasting," we see is all one.[2] "Which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled:" These are all expressions indifferently applicable both, 1. To the person of the Son of God, primarily meant by "the Word of life;" for that same glorious person who was from the beginning with the Father,—being now incarnate,—became the object of these their very senses, to this and the other apostles, who had so frequent opportunity to hear, and see, and behold him, and even to handle him with their hands: and, 2. To the gospel-revelation,—a secondary, not unintended, notion of "the Word of life," and whereof these latter expressions seem more especially meant: they denote the perfect certainty the apostles had (the rest of whom his manner of speaking seems purposely to comprehend with himself) of that truth, which, as he after speaks, they testified; it being their office and business as apostles so to do,[4] and it was necessary they should be able to do it with such assurance as these expressions import. Therefore having said, "Which we have heard," which imports a more overly notice, it is added, "Which we have seen,"—a much more certain way of knowing;[5] and "with our eyes,"—a more lively expression of that certainty, as Job expresses his expected sight of his Redeemer.[6] And to signify it was not a casual, transient glance, it is further said, "Which we have looked upon," — ἐθεασάμεθα; that is, studiously and of set purpose bent ourselves to contemplate: unto all which it is moreover added, "And our hands have handled,"—ἐψηλάφησαν; which though literally not otherwise applicable than to the person of our Lord incarnate, yet is a

[1] Prov. viii. 22—30.
[2] See of this epistle chap. ii. 13, 14.
[3] Luke xxiv. 39: John xx. 25.
[4] See John xv. 27; Acts i. 21, 22; iv. 20.
[5] As 2 Pet. i. 16, 17.
[6] Chap. xix. 27.

most emphatical metaphor, elegantly representing their most certain knowledge and lively sense of his excellent doctrine; as the expression is usual of a *palpable* truth, to signify a most evident one. So is that implied to be a truth that may be *felt*,—that this world hath a mighty and bountiful Sustainer and Lord; ψηλαφήσειαν.[1]

Ver. 2.—(For the Life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.)

He interrupts the stream of his discourse by this seasonable parenthesis, while he therein gives an account how "the Word of life," "the Life," "that eternal Life," (already noted to be here all one, and chiefly to mean the Son of God,) which, being "with the Father," must be to us invisible, came to be so sensibly known to mortal men on earth: which he doth by telling us he "was manifested." And that was sufficiently done, both who he was, and what he designed, in his partaking with us of flesh and blood and "being found in fashion as a man;" whereby he subjected himself to the notice of our senses and was hereupon said to have been "manifested in the flesh,"[2] the glory of his Divinity also shining forth most conspicuously, in his God-like conversation and wonderful works, through this veil, and confirming the truth of his heavenly doctrine, which more distinctly declared both that it was the Son of God who was come down into this wretched world of ours, and what the kind design was of his descent hither. So that what here the apostle says more briefly, that he was "manifested," well admits the larger account which he gives of it in his Gospel:[3] "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Whereupon, as he adds, he bears witness and shows forth what he had seen so manifested, as it belonged to his apostolical office to do.

[1] Acts xvii. 27. [2] 1 John iii. 5; 1 Tim. iii. 16. [3] Chap. i. 14.

Ver. 3.—That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

He now proceeds with what he intended, not only professing to testify most certainly known things,—which he further with great earnestness inculcates,—but declaring also the *end* of this testimony; namely, not merely that they to whom he writes might know them too, (as if the being a Christian did only stand in having some peculiar notions from other men, and that they were only to know for knowing's sake,) but that they might "have fellowship," that is, partake and communicate, with them,—namely, the apostles, and the whole community of living Christians,—in all the vital influences, holy practice, the dignities, pleasures, and consolations, belonging to the Christian state. Whereupon he adds, "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ;"—as much as to say, 'Nor are the advantages of that state, in their kind and nature, terrene, sensual, secular, but divine and heavenly; such as are imparted to us by "the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ;" or, wherein we are truly said to participate and have a communion with them:' that blessed Spirit, who is the immediate author to us of all gracious communication, —whence this is also styled "the communion of the Holy Ghost,"[1]—being in reality the Spirit of the Father and the Son.

Ver. 4.—And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

Not insipid, spiritless, empty, as carnal joy is,—apt through the deficiency of its cause to admit of intermingled qualms; but lively and vigorous,[2] well grounded,[3] such as is of the right kind, and will grow up into the perfect plenitude and "fulness of joy."[4]

Ver. 5.—This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

It being the professed scope and design of his writing to

[1] 2 Cor. xiii. 14. [2] 2 John 12. [3] John xvi. 24. [4] Ps. xvi. 11.

draw men to a final participation and communion with God in His own blessedness, he reckons nothing more necessary to it, than to settle in their minds a right notion of God; which, that it might be the more regarded, he introduces with a solemn preface: "This then is the message," etc., (though the word also signifies "promise," it here more fitly bears this rendering,) to notify,—1. That this which follows was not an imagination of his own concerning God, but His true representation of Himself. 2. That it was given him in charge to be delivered and communicated to others; a message a man neither hath of himself, nor is to reserve to himself: "We have heard" it "of Him, and declare" it "unto you," as consonantly hereto he speaks. It is the Divine pleasure it should be published to the world, and that all men should know that as from Him;—that is, that He is not a Being of mere power, as some, or of mere mercy, as others are apt to fancy of him; either whereof were a very maimed and most disagreeable notion of the Deity. Power without goodness were apt to run into fury; goodness without wisdom and righteousness would as naturally turn to a supine indifferency, and neglect of distinguishing judicially between good and bad; things neither suitable to the Governor of the world nor possible to the absolutely perfect Being. "God is light:" In God all true perfections and excellencies must be understood eminently to concur; and of them more could not have been comprehended under one word, (especially that belong to him considered relatively to his creatures,—of which perfections it concerns us to have more distinct, formed, positive conceptions in all our applications to him,) than are here some way represented or resembled by "light,"—namely, that he is a Being of most lively, penetrative vigour, absolute simplicity, immutability, knowledge, wisdom, sincerity, righteousness, serenity, benignity, joy, and felicity, and especially of most bright and glorious holiness and purity; and in whom "is no darkness at all,"—nothing contrary or repugnant hereto.

Ver. 6.—If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.

Light and darkness are frequently put for holiness and wickedness.[1] The sum then is, that if any pretend to friendship with God or to have received holy and gracious influences from him, and do yet lead wicked lives, they are liars, even guilty of a practical lie,—doing what makes their profession false and insincere.

Ver. 7.—But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

"But if we walk,"—which is a continued and progressive motion; that is, do persevere and improve in holiness. "In the light:" being transformed into the holy image and likeness of God, and showing themselves "the children of light," as he is "light," and "the Father of lights." "We have fellowship one with another;" have fellowship "with him," μετ' αὐτοῦ, as one copy reads: however, "we" must comprehend God, and this the contexture of discourse shows. "And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,"—καθαρίζει: lest our purity and holiness should be thought to have deserved such a privilege, it is cautiously added, "and the blood," etc., is that which alone expiateth, or makes atonement for our sins,—the proper notion of cleansing here. Our former sinfulness and present imperfect holiness render it impossible God should admit us to communion with him for our own sakes, or without such an intervening sacrifice; καθάρματα usually signifying expiations. And if we further extend the notion of cleansing so as to comprehend internal, subjective purification, (which also the word may admit,) the further meaning is, that even that purifying influence, whereby we are qualified for present holy walking with God and for final blessedness in him, we owe to the merit and procurement of the Redeemer's blood.

Ver. 8.—If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

[1] Luke xvi. 8; Rom. xiii. 12; Eph. v. 8; 1 Thess. v. 5.

In pursuance of which scope, he fitly adds: "If we" should "say,"—that is, either profess it as a principle, or think in our minds, or not bear in our hearts a penitential, remorseful sense, correspondent to the contrary apprehension: such as is implied in 'confessing';[1] for "saying" usually signifies the habitual bent and disposition of the heart and practice,[2]—"that we have no sin;"—namely, that we are so innocent creatures as not to need such an expiatory sacrifice as that above mentioned, and such purifying influence thereupon, but that we may be admitted to communion with God upon our own account and for our worthiness' sake, without being beholden to the blood of Christ;—"We deceive ourselves;"—delude our own souls. "And the truth,"—that is, the system and frame of gospel doctrine[3]—"is not in us:" cannot be duly entertained, lies not evenly and agreeably with itself in our minds, or hath no place with effect in us.[4]

Ver. 9.—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But on the contrary, "if we confess our sins,"—if we apply ourselves to him suitably to the condition of sinners, confessing ourselves such, with that self-abasing sense of sin which may dispose us to accept and apply his offered remedy, upon which it is implied we will do it,—"he is faithful," so true to his promise, "and just," fidelity being a part of justice, or there is with him that equity and righteousness, (which sometimes signify goodness or clemency,[5] and which, more strictly taken, permit him not to exact from us the satisfaction which he hath accepted in the atonement made by his Son, in his own way applied, and upon his own terms to be reckoned unto us,) that he will not fail "to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;"—which may either be added as a further expression of the same thing, or may moreover signify his vouchsafing that purifying influence of the Spirit of Christ, obtained also by his blood,

[1] 1 John i. 9. [2] Job xxi. 14; Jer. xxii. 21. [3] As 2 John 1, 2, 4.
[4] As John viii. 37. [5] 1 Sam. xii. 7; Ps. cxii. 9.

which shall both purge away and prevent the defilements that would render us incapable of His own holy communion.

Ver. 10.—If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar;"[1] which they make him that believe not his word,[2] expressly charging all men with sin.[3] "And," consequently, "his word," or "truth,"[4] which we contradict, "is not in us." The sum is, that we are not to be received into God's holy society and communion under the notion of always innocent and unoffending persons, but as pardoned and purified sinners.

Chapter II.

Ver. 1.—My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

He endeavours in this to steer them a middle course, that they might neither presume to sin, nor despair if they did; and bespeaks them with a compellation importing both authority and love,—well becoming him as then an aged person, an apostle, their teacher, and who was their most affectionate spiritual father; and lets them know, the first design of what he was now writing, had hitherto written, and was further to write, was, that they might to their uttermost avoid sinning at all: but adds, if, through human frailty, they did sin, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" implying our need of Christ for renewed as well as first pardon; and not of his death only, but continual intercession: and represents the advantages Christ hath for success in his interposing for us, in respect both of his relation to God as his Father, (which is put indefinitely, "the Father," that the consideration might not be excluded of his being *our* Father also,) and his righteousness, by which he could not but be acceptable to him.

Ver. 2.—And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.

[1] See verses 8, 9. [2] Chap. v. 10. [3] Rom. iii. 19, 23. [4] Ver. 8.

"And he is the propitiation for our sins:" The adding of these words shows that our Lord grounds his intercession for pardon of sin unto penitent believers, upon his having made atonement for them before; and therefore that he doth not herein merely supplicate for favour, but, which is the proper business of an advocate, plead law and right,—agreeably to what is said above.[1] "And not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world:" Nor is his undertaking herein limited to any select persons among believers, but he must be understood to be an advocate for all for whom he is effectually a propitiation; that is, for all that truly believe in him,[2] all the world over.

Ver. 3.—And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

This faith is often in the Holy Scripture signified by the name of "knowledge;"[3] namely, an appropriative, transformative knowledge, by which we own and accept God in Christ as ours, (expressed also by "acknowledgment," ἐπίγνωσις,[4]) and are changed into his likeness.[5] The meaning then is, that we perceive or discern ourselves to be sincere believers, and consequently that Christ is both our propitiation and advocate, when it is become habitual and easy to us to obey his commandments.

Ver. 4.—He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

"A liar,"—a false, hypocritical pretender.[6]

Ver. 5.—But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

His faith "worketh by love,"[7] his love is "perfected," and attains its end in obedience, whereof it is the vital principle.[8] Such an efficacious governing knowledge of Him therefore, as, by the power of the love which it produces, subdues our souls to the obedience of Him, is a certain proof to us of our union with Him,[9] and relation to Him.

[1] Chap. i. 9. [2] Rom. iii. 25. [3] Isa. liii. 11; John xvii. 3.
[4] Eph. i. 17; Col. ii. 2. [5] 2 Cor. iii. 18. [6] As chap. i. 6.
[7] Gal. v. 6. [8] 1 John v. 3; John xiv. 15. [9] 1 John v. 20.

Ver. 6.—He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

And this proof we ought to give. For whereas our Lord Jesus Christ was not only our lawgiver, but our pattern, and practised, himself, what he commanded us; if indeed we have an abiding, real union with him, we partake of his Spirit,[1] which must be understood to work uniformly, and enable us "to walk," in the main of our course, according to our measure of that Spirit, "as he walked."

Ver. 7.—Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

This commandment must be that which he insists on *below*,[2] and which in different respects he calleth both "old" and "new." Not "new," he says, in opposition to their Gnostic seducers; to intimate he was not about to entertain them with vain novelties, as they did,—all whose peculiar doctrines were no other than innovations upon true Christianity; but "old," namely, a part of original Christianity, as it came pure first from our Lord Christ himself; the "commandment," or word, "which" they "had," or "had heard," "from the beginning." This phrase, "from the beginning," being here put in conjunction with some act of theirs, "ye had," or "have heard,"[3] shows it to intend a much later term of commencement than chap. i. 1; —though also, considering them as *Jews*, whom he here writes to, it might run up as high as the law given by Moses; or, even as *men*, to the creation, and the first impression of the law of nature,—whereof this was a very noble part,—upon the heart of man.

Ver. 8.—Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

Yet also he calls it "a new commandment," as our Saviour did,[4] upon the subjoined accounts:—"Which thing is true;"

[1] Rom. viii. 9. [2] Verses 9—11. [3] As also 2 John 5, 6. [4] John xiii. 34.

that is, evident, or verified, fulfilled, exemplified: "In Him;" namely, in that new and high demonstration He had given of the sincerity and greatness of His own love, laying down His life for us:[1] "And in you," or "us," as some read;—that is, the mind of God herein is, by a new and fresh light, most evidently and gloriously signified in or among you, (the subject being here collective and plural admits this varied and very usual sense of the particle "in,") inasmuch as "the darkness is past;" that is, the heathenish ignorance that made the world barbarous,—a darkness in which the furious lusts and passions of men are wont to rage, turning this earth into another hell,[2]—is in a great measure vanished; and also the dark umbrage of the Judaic dispensation, (some read σκία for σκοτία, not "darkness," but "shadow,") in which the love of God to men was more obscurely represented, is passed away and gone. "And the true light now shineth:" the love and grace of God towards sinners, the pattern and argument of our mutual love to one another, shines with "true light," that is evident, in opposition to darkness, or immediately substantial, in opposition to type or shadow;[3] representing the gracious design of God, and His very nature, who "is love,"[4] with so bright and glorious beams as ought to transform us into His likeness, and which therefore render the mutual hatred of one another the most incongruous thing to us in all the world. Whereupon he adds,—

Ver. 9.—He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

To be "in the light," signifies to be under the transforming, governing power of it,—as the phrases import of being "in the flesh," and "in the Spirit,"[5] being expounded by walking "after the flesh," and "after the Spirit."[6] He therefore, that "hateth his brother," (a thing so contrary to the design of the gospel, whatever he pretends,) "is" still "in darkness," under the power of the unregenerate principle

[1] As John xv. 13. [2] Ps. lxxiv. 20. [3] As John i. 9, 14, 17.
[4] 1 John iv. 8, 16. [5] Rom. viii. 9. [6] Rom. viii. 1.

of impure and malignant darkness; the gospel hath done him no good,—is to him but an impotent and ineffectual light, in the midst whereof, by stiff winking and an obstinate resistance, and exclusion of that pure and holy light, he creates to himself a dark and a hellish night.

Ver. 10.—He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

"His brother," put indefinitely, must be understood universally; that is, he that loveth, not this or that fellow-Christian, upon some personal or private reason, but all, upon one and the same common and truly Christian account. "Abideth in the light;" shows or doth demonstrate the settled, constant power, the regenerate, divine principle hath over him. "And there is none occasion of stumbling in him;" Greek,—"no scandal," no inconsistent thing, that ought to occasion him to judge otherwise of himself, or others to think otherwise of him.

Ver. 11.—But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes:

Hath no principle to guide or govern him but what is common to the unregenerate world, so that his whole life is a continual error; nor doth he understand or consider the tendency of his course, being still under the power of an affected darkness, that makes his eyes, or understanding, of no more use than if he were quite blind, or had none at all. So weighty and important is the precept which he had to lay down,[1] of not loving the world, etc., that he introduces it with the solemnity of a most pathetic preface, contained in these three following verses, wherein he applies himself severally to the distinct orders and ranks into which Christians were capable of being reduced, the matter being of common and equal concernment to all of them. And he speaks, suitably to the condition and state of each, such things as whereby he might most effectually insinuate with them,

[1] Verse 15.

and oblige them deeply to consider, what he had to say; doubling also his application to each of them, out of the earnestness of his intention and endeavour to fasten the exhortation upon them which was to follow.

Ver. 12.—I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

He here uses an appellation before applied[1] to all in common, being put alone; but being now set in contradistinction to others, must be understood to intend a distinct rank of Christians; namely, those more newly entered into the Christian state: and to them he suggests the free remission of their sins, "for His name's sake,"—that is, for His own sake,—as the reason why they should, out of ingenuity, and a new, recent sense of God's mercy towards them, comply with His holy pleasure in the following precept. The remission of their sins being a first and most early privilege with them, that commenced from the beginning of their sincere Christianity, and which was sealed to them in their late baptism, it is the more fitly mentioned to this first rank of Christians.

Ver. 13.—I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

Unto "fathers:" because to such belong much experience and the knowledge of ancient things, he ascribeth the knowledge of "Him who is" the Ancient of days, "from the beginning," and than whom none is more ancient, and whom they should be supposed so well to know, by their long-continued course in religion, as fully to understand His good and acceptable will,—what would be pleasing and what displeasing to Him. "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one:" to such as were in the flower of their strength and age in Christianity, he attributeth victory; to whom therefore, it would be inglorious to slur the honour of that noble conquest they had gained over "the wicked one,"—the "god of this world," as he is elsewhere

[1] Verse 1.

called,[1]—by suffering themselves again to be entangled in its snares and bands. His method is, we see, to place this order of Christians last, as a middle state, which he would have us conceive afterwards to be interposed between the other two; which method, we find, he observes in going over them again the second time. "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father." He again first begins with his "little children," whom he now bespeaks by another compellation in the Greek, before τεκνία, now παιδία,—importing no material difference, except this latter signify more capacity of instruction: and he now also gives them another character, which implies so much, that he not only considers them as the passive subjects of a privilege, remission of sins, which they were capable of in the first moment of their being born into the Christian state, (as the word τεκνία, above, seems to intimate,) but as being able to use their understanding, and consider whose children they were,—"because ye have known the Father;" before said also of the eldest sort of Christians; but He is there mentioned by a description more suitable to their more aged state; and therefore the knowledge ascribed to the one and to the other, though the same in kind, must, in respect of degrees, be accommodately understood.

Ver. 14.—I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

To the former sort he only repeateth what he had said before, supposing their greater wisdom to need no more;[2] only the repetition importeth his earnest desire they would again and again consider it. The other he also puts in mind of their active strength and vigour, and of the rootedness which the gospel must now be supposed to have in them, whereby they were enabled to "overcome the wicked one;" and by all which endowments, they were all both enabled and obliged, to comport the better with the following precept and its enforcements.

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 4.

[2] See Luc. Brugens., Not. in Bibl. Sacr., of the insertion of this clause.

Ver. 15.—Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

What he here means by the forbidden object of our love must be gathered from his own explication.[1] The love itself forbidden, in reference thereto, is that excess thereof whereby any adhere to terrene things as their best good; wherewith, as he adds, any sincere love to God is inconsistent,[2]—a consideration so awful and tremendous, that it is not strange the precept it enforces should have so solemn and urgent an introduction.

Ver. 16.—For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Here he explains his meaning; what, under the name of "the world" and "the things" of it, we are not to love, or under what notion we ought not to love it,—namely, the world as it contains the objects and nutriment of these mentioned lusts: either more grossly sensual, called "the lust of the flesh," namely, the gluttony, drunkenness, whoredom, etc.;[3] or that which is excited more immediately by the fancy, unto which the eye especially ministereth, the excessive appetite of much wealth and great possessions; which the eye is therefore said to desire, and not to be satisfied with,[4]—called therefore "the lust of the eyes:" and again, the ambitious affection of the pomp and glory of the world, vain applause, the unmerited and overvalued praise and observance of other men, with power over them, affected for undue ends or only with a self-exalting design; meant by "the pride of life," forbidden by our Saviour to his disciples.[5] This triple distribution some observe to have been before used by some of the ancient learned Jews, and imitated by certain of the more refined heathens; whence, as being formerly known and understood, the apostle might be induced to make use of it. And these lusts are therefore argued to be inconsistent with the love of the Father, as not being of Him, but

[1] Verse 16. [2] As Matt. vi. 24; Luke xiv. 33. [3] Rom. xiii. 13, 14.
[4] Eccles. ii. 8—10; iv. 8. [5] Matt. xx. 25, 26.

"of the world;" not from the divine Spirit, but the spirit of the world.

Ver. 17.—And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

He sets the difference in view, of living according to the common genius, will, or inclination of the world, (which is lust), and according to the divine will;—that he who unites himself in his will and desire with the former,—which vanishes, objects and appetite altogether,—must (which is implied) perish therewith; but he that unites himself with the supreme eternal Good, by a will that is guided by and conformed to the divine will, "abideth for ever,"—partakes a felicity co-eternal with the object and rule upon which his heart was set, and which it was guided by.

Ver. 18.—Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

"The last time:" The time here referred to seems to be the destruction of Jerusalem, and the finishing of the Jewish state, both civil and ecclesiastical; in the Greek, "the last hour;" the approaching period of Daniel's seventy weeks, as Mr. Mede understands it, in his 'Apostasy of the Latter Times.' Whereas, therefore, it was now a known and expected thing among Christians, that the eminent "antichrist," or antichristian state,[1] was to come, or take place; therefore the apostle says, "ye," that is, the generality of Christians, "have heard" so much. So he says, "Even *now*," as the forerunners of that eminent one, "are there many antichrists;"[2] namely, noted heretics and seducers then in being: not such falsely assuming vicarious Christs as only pretended to do that part which the Jews expected from their Messiah,—the delivering them from the Roman tyranny,—and so set up to be merely civil or secular Christs, having themselves never been Christians; but such as had revolted from Christianity, and now laboured fundamentally to subvert

[1] Expressly foretold, 2 Thess. ii. Foretold also by our Saviour, Matt. xxiv.
[2] Ver. 22; 2 John 7.

it, denying Christ to be "come in the flesh,"[1] having been before professed Christians, as appears by the following words:—

Ver. 19.—They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

"If they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." Sincere and living Christians are so strongly held in with Christ and the truly Christian community, by a union and bond of life, and by sense of pleasures which thereupon they find in that holy communion, with the expectation which their lively faith gives them of eternal life at last, that there is "no doubt" of their continuance. "But they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." Others, that are Christians upon external inducements, alter, as these do, and are permitted to do so, that the difference may appear between true and counterfeit ones.[2]

Ver. 20.—But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

See note on verse 27.

Ver. 21.—I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

He prudently intimates his confidence concerning them, together with the pleasure he himself took, as any one would, in communicating the sentiments of holy truth to prepared, receptive minds; implying also that any part of false doctrine doth so ill match and square with the frame of divine truth, that judicious Christians may discern they are not of a piece.

Ver. 22.—Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

Especially may the ill-accord be discerned between divine

[1] Verse 22; 2 John 7. [2] 1 Cor. xi. 19.

truth and a lie, when the lie is so directly levelled against the foundations upon which the whole fabric is built; as the denying Jesus to be the Christ strikes at all. And though he that doth so seems only an "antichrist" as directing his opposition but against Christ, he really as much "denieth the Father," who testified of him.

Ver. 23.—Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [*but*] *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*

To have the Father and the Son, is, by faith, love, and obedience, vitally to adhere to the one and the other. The latter part of this verse, though it be not in the ordinary Greek copies, is in some of the versions, and said to be in some Greek manuscripts also, whence it is supplied, very agreeably to the apostle's scope and usual way of writing.

Ver. 24.—Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

He only exhorts them to persevere in that faith which they at first received, whereby their union with God in Christ would be preserved entire.

Ver. 25.—And this is the promise that he hath promised us, *even* eternal life.

Which perseverance they are highly encouraged to, by the promise of so great a thing as eternal life at length.

Ver. 26.—These *things* have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

So much he thought requisite to be said in respect of their danger by seducers, though their safety was principally to depend upon what he next mentions.

Ver. 27.—But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

"But the anointing which ye have received:" It is evident that the ancient anointing of persons to some

eminent office was not a mere empty rite of investiture or authorization, but also a symbol of their qualification, by another Spirit then coming upon them. Whereupon our Lord Jesus was eminently "the Christ," or "anointed one;" not only as denoting His solemn investiture with the sacred offices of king, priest, and prophet, which were all wont to be entered into by unction, but as signifying also his receiving the Spirit "not by measure,"—by which He was most perfectly qualified for them. And whereas He is also said to have made those that believe on Him, in a far inferior sense, "kings and priests to his Father," to them also he imparts of the same Spirit;[1] whence they are said to be anointed too.[2] And hence, as is here said,[3] they do not "need," etc. "Ye need not that any man teach you;"—not as if they had absolutely no need at all of human teaching,—for the apostle supposes not himself to be now doing a vain or needless thing,—but that they had less need; having the internal principles of light and life in them, they were in a great measure capable of steering their own course. They had in themselves a living, ingrafted word, enabling them to teach and commune with themselves.[4] Hereupon their own reins could instruct them;[5] or, they could instruct themselves, ἑαυτούς, as that may be read Col. iii. 16; "the word of Christ" dwelling "richly" in them. Therefore they did not so need to be taught, as those that know not the first principles of the oracles of God. "Teacheth you of all things;"—that is, all such necessary and essential things to the life and being of Christianity,—of which sort that doctrine concerning the Messiah was, which he was now speaking of; not "all things" simply, for that had been to attribute to them far higher knowledge than he could pretend to himself, even that which was peculiar to God only. Nor was that knowledge which they had of those necessary things, to be thought the effect of an immediate inspiration, but such as by ordinary external means they

[1] Rom. viii. 9. [2] 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. [3] Verse 27.
[4] As Deut. xxx. 11, 12; Rom. x. 7—9. [5] Ps. xvi. 7.

had already learned; but made vital and efficacious by the special sanctifying influence and operation of the Holy Ghost; who having begotten in them a correspondent impress to those great truths which are after godliness, formed the new creature in them which is begotten of the word of truth; had made them capable of adjudication, or of distinguishing by a spiritual sense,[1] between things that were grateful, suitable, and nutritive to the life of the new creature in them, and such things as were noxious and offensive: whereas, in reference to things more remote from the vitals of religion and godliness, none can assure themselves of such a privilege. And as to these, they are to expect it in the way of their own sincere and diligent endeavours and prayers; as the effect of the habit of grace maintained and kept up in life and vigour; and a reward of their sincere resignation and subjection of heart and soul to the governing power of truth, so far as it should be understood and known of them, according to that of our Saviour,[2] "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God," etc. And thus they might certainly keep their station, and "abide in him;" unto which they are therefore exhorted :—

Ver. 28.—And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

He condescendingly includes himself with them: "That we may have confidence;" intimating, for their encouragement, the common mutual joy they should have together at Christ's appearance; he, that he had not been wanting in his endeavours that they might persevere; and they, that they had persevered; which is implied in the menace of the contrary, upon the contrary supposition.

Ver. 29.—If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

Lest he should be thought only solicitous to preserve among them the right notions of the Christian doctrine, as if that

[1] Phil. i. 9, 10. [2] John vii. 17.

alone would suffice them for their salvation and blessedness, (which was the conceit of the Gnostics touching their own notions, that the entertaining of them would save men, whatsoever men they were, or howsoever they lived,) he subjoins this serious monition, "If ye know," etc.; intimating, that whatsoever they had of the knowledge of God would avail them nothing, if, whereas "He is righteous," they were not transformed by it into His likeness, and enabled thereby to "do righteousness,"—which alone would evidence their Divine birth, since God hath no children destitute of His image, or who resemble Him not.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1.—Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

So late mention having been made of that great thing, in the close of the foregoing chapter, being "born of God," the holy apostle is here in a transport, in the contemplation of the glorious consequent privilege, to be "called" his "sons;" and of that admirable love from whence the whole hath proceeded. "What manner!"—ποταπήν; or, 'How great!' "Called," here, (as often, referring to God as the author,) signifies to be made, or to be.[1] He confers not the name without the thing,—the new, even a divine nature,[2] in regeneration,—the real advantages and dignity of the relation by adoption; and all of mere (and the greatest) kindness and good-will.[3] Hence he intimates, it ought not to be counted grievous, that "the world knoweth us not;"—that is, doth not own or acknowledge us for its own, is not kind to us, yea, hates and persecutes us,—"knowing," often, after the Hebrew phrase, signifying affection;[4] and accordingly, "not knowing," disaffection, and the consequent effects.[5] Nor should it be thought strange, "because it knew him not:"

[1] Matt. v. 9, 45; John i. 12; Rom. iv. 17. [2] 2 Pet. i. 4.
[3] Tit. iii. 5–7. [4] 1 Cor. viii. 3; 2 Tim. ii. 19. [5] Matt. vii. 23.

the Father, and the whole family, are to it an "*invisum genus*," hated alike.

Ver. 2.—Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Our present state he affirms to be unquestionably that of "sons," whatsoever hardships from the world, or severer discipline from our Father, we must for a while undergo: but for our future state it is much above us to comprehend distinctly the glory of it; "it doth not yet appear,"—it is yet an unrevealed thing;[1] a veil is drawn before it, which is to be drawn aside at the appointed season of the "manifestation of the sons of God."[2] But so much we in the general know of it,—so certain are the apprehensions of faith,—that "when he shall appear," or display his own glory in the appearance of his Son, who is then "to come in the glory of his Father,"[3] "we shall be like him," as it befits children to be unto their father;—that is, his image shall then be perfected in us, which was defaced so greatly in the apostasy; is restored imperfectly in regeneration;[4] must be daily improved in progressive sanctification,—so that as God was above said to be light, Christians are to "shine as lights," as "the sons of God, without rebuke," representing and glorifying their Father;[5] but is *then* to be advanced in us to a far higher pitch than ever, in respect both of holiness and blessedness. "For we shall see him as he is;"—that is, so far as the limited capacity of our natures can admit, and are therefore by that likeness to be qualified for such vision: which eternal efficacious vision doth also continue that likeness, the causal particle "for," admitting both those references.[6]

Ver. 3.—And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

"Purifieth himself;"—that is, not only is obliged hereto,

[1] Rom. viii. 18. [2] Ver. 19. [3] Matt. xvi. 27; 1 Tim. vi. 14—16.
[4] Eph. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10. [5] Matt. v. 16; Phil. ii. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 9.
[6] See Ps. xvii. 15.

but by the efficacious influence of this hope, if it be of the same kind,—that "lively hope" unto which Christians are said to be "begotten,"[1]—is daily more and more transformed through a continual intention of mind towards the holy God, upon whom that hope is set, (for it is said to be hope "in him," or rather "upon him," ἐπ' αὐτῷ,) into the image of the Divine purity; knowing also, (which must be a potent inducement to very earnest endeavour this way,) that our future conformity to God in glory and blessedness hereafter, depends upon our present vigorous and effectual pursuit of conformity to him in holiness here.[2] And it is enforced by what follows:—

Ver. 4.—Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law:

Which is added to signify nothing can be more unreasonable than the expectation of partaking with God in the glory and blessedness of the future state, if we now allow ourselves in a course of sin, or of transgressing His holy law,—which is the very notion of sin; and is again further enforced from the design of our Redeemer:—

Ver. 5.—And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin:

Implying how great an absurdity it were to expect salvation and blessedness by our sinless Saviour, and yet indulge ourselves in sin, against His design, not only to expiate our sins, but to make us sinless like Himself.

Ver. 6.—Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

By "sinneth," he meaneth the same thing as afterwards by "committeth sin."[3] "Seeing" and "knowing" intend inward union, acquaintance, and converse; such as abode in him implies.[4]

Ver. 7.—Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

[1] 1 Pet. i. 3. [2] Matt. v. 8; Heb. xii. 14. [3] See verses 8, 9. [4] See John v. 37; 3 John 11.

This caution implies the zealous endeavour of the seducers of that time to instil their poisonous doctrine and principles of licentiousness; and his own solicitude lest these Christians should receive them, and be mischiefed by them. Whereas, therefore, they were wont to suggest that a merely notional knowledge was enough to recommend men and make them acceptable to God, though they lived never so impure lives; he inculcates that only they that did righteousness,—namely, in a continued course, living conformably to the rules of the gospel,—were righteous: and that they must aim to be so, "even as He is righteous;" not only making the righteousness and holy life of Christ the object of their trust, but the pattern of their walking and practice.

Ver. 8.—He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

"He that committeth sin:" The apostle's notion of committing sin may be intepreted by his own phrase,[1] ὁ κακοποιῶν, "a doer of evil," and by that used in both Testaments, "a worker of iniquity,"—which is not every one that doth any one single act of sin; as his ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην,[2] "a doer of righteousness," and ὁ ἀγαθοποιῶν,[3] "a doer of good," is not every one who doth any one righteous or good action; any more than we call him a worker or maker of anything, (as signifying a manual occupation,) who only makes a single attempt, but him who hath acquired the habitual skill, and doth ordinarily employ himself accordingly. A worker or maker of sin,—as we may fitly render this ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν,—is an habitual or customary sinner; one that sinneth with deliberation, not by surprise; from a prevailing habit, that either continueth him in a course of actual known sin, or that withholds him from repenting sincerely, and turning to God from the sin which he hath committed; by which repentance he should not only refrain from further gross acts of sin,—which an impenitent person upon other inducements may

[1] 3 John 11. [2] 1 John iii. 7. [3] 3 John 11.

do,—but mortify, and prevail against, all sinful habits and inclinations. In the same sense he useth the expression of 'sinning.'[1] And such a sinner, he says, "is of the devil;" as if he were born of him, were his child, really conformed to him, and having his sinning nature; as our Saviour tells the Jews, having applied to them the same phrase before of committing sin,[2] that they were of their father the devil:[3] as also this apostle[4] says, "He that doeth good is of God,"—that is, born of God, or His child; as we find he uses the expressions of being "born of God," and being "of God," promiscuously and with indifference,[5] the latter being elliptical in reference to the former. Whereas sin was therefore originally the devil's work, he adds, as a further engagement against it, that "the Son of God was manifested,"[6] appeared in the flesh, showed Himself in this world of ours, on purpose "to destroy," or, as the word signifies, that He might dissolve the frame of all such works.

Ver. 9.—Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

To be "born of God" is, in the words of a very learned annotator, Dr. Hammond, "to have received some special influence from God, and by the help and power of that, to be raised to a pious life. Agreeably, γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ, 'he that hath been born of God,' is literally, he that hath had such a blessed change wrought in him by the operation of God's Spirit in his heart, as to be translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of His own dear Son; transformed in the spirit of his mind,—that is, sincerely changed from all evil to all good, from an obedience to the flesh, etc., to an obedience to God. Only it is here to be noted, that the phrase is not so to be taken as to denote only the act of this change, the first impression of this virtue on the patient, the single transient act of regeneration or reformation, and that as in the *preter* tense, now past; but rather a continued

[1] Verses 6, 9. [2] John viii. 34. [3] Ver. 44. [4] 3 John 11.
[5] Verses 9, 10; chap. v. 18, 19. [6] As verse 5.

course, a permanent state; so as a regenerate man and a child of God are all one, and signify him that lives a pious and godly life, and continues to do so," etc. To the same purpose this author also speaks, Note on John i. 13, and in his paraphrase on that verse: "Those which live according to the will of God, and neither the natural, nor carnal, nor bare moral principle." This change, introducing the consequent course, divers texts of Scripture explain.[1] Now of one thus born of God, it is said he "doth not commit sin,"[2] and for the reason here alleged. "His seed;" the principles of enlivened holy truth.[3] "And he cannot sin:" which is not to be understood simply as if he could not sin at all, which were to contradict what he had said before,[4] and supposed;[5] but he cannot "commit sin."[6] And it is plain the apostle intends by these two expressions the same thing. He cannot "sin;" that is, do an act of known, gross sin, deliberately, easily, remorselessly, maliciously, as Cain,[7] out of a hatred of goodness: or, do not such acts customarily, or not so "unto death,"[8] but that, through the advantage of inlaid principles, or the remaining seed, by dependence upon the grace, Spirit, and covenant of God in Christ, he may timeously recover. "Because he is born of God;" that is, inasmuch as it belongs to his temper and inclination, in respect of the holy new nature received in regeneration, to abhor from the grosser acts, much more from a course of sin;[9] and to his state, as he is a child of God, to have that interest in the grace of Christ, that he may implore, trust, obtain, and improve it, to his being kept from such destructive sinning. And it being evident, by his deep and thorough change, that he is born of God and chosen to be an heir of eternal life, as his children are heirs, he may and ought, not in a way of presumptuous negligence, but of vigilance and humble dependence, certainly to expect

[1] John iii. 3, 5, 6; 2 Cor. v. 17; Eph. ii. 10; iv. 24; James i. 18, etc.
[2] As verse 8. [3] As 1 Pet. i. 23; James i. 18. [4] Chap. i. 8.
[5] Chap. ii. 1. [6] As iii. 9. [7] Verse 12. [8] As chap. v. 16.
[9] See Gen. xxxix. 9; Acts iv. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 8; Gal. v. 17.

being so kept. Nor is it strange so much should be affirmed, upon so unspeakably better grounds, of the Christian state, when such boasts are to be read concerning some among the Pagans, that one might as soon divert the sun from its course as turn such a one from the course of righteousness. Though we may also suppose this form of speech might be intended by the apostle to be understood by the more superficial professors of Christianity,—who might be generally apt enough to look upon themselves as born of God and his children,—as *parenetical* and more enforcingly hortatory; in pursuance of his former scope, to keep them off from the licentious courses of their seducers: as much as to say, 'It cannot be that you, who avow yourselves born of God, should do like them.' So we usually say, *that* cannot but be, or cannot be, which we apprehend more highly and clearly reasonable should be, or not be. '*Non potes avelli*,' etc. Such rhetoric the apostle uses with Agrippa, "I know that thou believest;"—as if it were impossible he should not.

Ver. 10.—In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

Upon what was said, he reduces all men each to their own family and father, concluding it manifest whither they belonged: that is, he shows, upon the grounds before expressed, who do not belong to God and His family, leaving it thence to be collected, since two fathers and families divide the world, to which they must be reckoned: that is, they belong not to God, and consequently to that worst of fathers,—who first, in the general, do not righteousness; the devil being the first sinner, they are his descendants; and who next, particularly, love not their brethren,—which most expressly demonstrates a diabolical nature.

Ver. 11.—For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

"From the beginning:"[1] as much as to say, they cannot be

[1] See chap. ii. 7, 8.

of God therefore, that cross so fundamental a precept, so expressive of his nature and will.

Ver. 12.—Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

And what again on the other hand, (as much as to say), can be more devil-like than such a temper as Cain's was, whose hatred of his brother brake out into actual murder, upon no other account but because his brother was better than he? which showed him to be "of that wicked one," of the serpent's seed: so early was such seed sown, and so ancient the enmity between seed and seed.

Ver. 13.—Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

This being so devilish a quality, and the world so generally under his power, as 'the god' of it,[1] it is not to be thought strange that good men should be the marks and designed objects of the world's hatred.

Ver. 14.—We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death.

The notion of 'brother' must not be understood so narrowly as only to signify such as we have particular inclination to, as being of our own party and opinion, or kindred, or who have obliged us by special kindness; for to confine our love within such limits, were no argument of our having "passed from death unto life," or more than is to be found with the worst of men.[2] Nor must it be understood exclusively of the regenerate only; but must be taken first, more generally, in the natural sense, for all mankind; in the same latitude as "neighbour" in that summary of the second table, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" originally intended not to Jews, as such, but men; and therefore excludes not our enemies, by our Saviour's interpretation:[3] secondly, in a more special, namely, the spiritual sense,—for such as are our brethren by regeneration; so the children with us of the

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 4. [2] Matt. v. 46, 47. [3] Matt. v. 43, 44.

same Father: that is, whereas the blessed God Himself is the '*primum amabile*,' the first object of love, all others, persons or things, ought to be loved proportionably to what prints or characters of the Divine excellency we find impressed upon them. Human nature hath resemblances in it of His spiritual, intelligent, immortal nature; regeneracy, of His holiness. And so He loves his creatures Himself,—severing their malignity (where that is to be found) that is of themselves, from what of real good there is in them, which is from Him. When therefore a correspondent frame of love is impressed upon us and inwrought into our temper, His image, who "is love," is renewed in us; which, in this noble part of it, the devil had so eminently defaced in the world, possessing the souls of men with mutual animosities and enmities against one another, but especially such as should be found to have upon them any impress of the most excellent kind of goodness,—that is, of true piety and holiness. And by this renovation of His image in us, whereby we are enabled to love others for His sake, and proportionably to what characters of Him are upon them, we appear to be His children,[1] begotten of Him into a state of life, out of that death which is upon the rest of the world;[2] and wherein every one still abides that thus loves not his brother.

Ver. 15.—Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

That life into which the regenerate are begotten, is nothing else than the beginning or first principle of eternal life;[3] whereof they cannot but be destitute who hate their brethren,—a thing so contrary to the Divine life, nature, and image, and which makes the person affected with it, in the temper and habit of his mind, a very murderer.

Ver. 16.—Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

"He laid down his life for us:" The intimate union

[1] Matt. v. 45. [2] Eph. ii. 1. [3] John iv. 14.

between the Divine nature and the human in Christ, gives ground for the calling Christ's life as man, the life of God;[1] his blood is said to be God's "own blood." And this testimony of God's love to us, his laying down his life for us, ought so to transform us into his likeness, that out of the power of that Divine principle, the love of God in us, (so that implanted love is called,[2] "the love of God,") we should never hesitate or make a difficulty to lay down our lives for the Christian community, or even for the common good and welfare of men, being duly called thereto.

Ver. 17.—But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

That is, if the love of God in us should make us lay down our lives for the brethren, and we be not willing in their necessity and our own ability, to relieve them, how plain is the case, that it is not in us!

Ver. 18.—My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth:

As much as to say, it is a vain thing to make verbal pretences of love, without any real proof of it.

Ver. 19.—And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

"And hereby we know that we are of the truth;" that is, this shall demonstrate to us that we are the children of the truth, begotten by it,[3] when we resemble it; have the correspondent impress of the gospel,—that great representation of the love of God,—upon us. "And shall assure our hearts before him;"—so shall our hearts be quieted, and well satisfied concerning our states Godward.

Ver. 20.—For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

"If our heart," or "our conscience," "condemn us," namely, in plain things,—as this of loving our brother is,—

[1] As Acts xx. 28. [2] Verse 17. [3] James i. 18.

and wherein the mind of God is evidently the same with our own conscience; His superiority, to whom our conscience is but an under-judge, ought much more to awe us, especially considering how much more He knows of us than we do of ourselves.[1]

Ver. 21.—Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God.

But for their not condemning us, though the expression be merely negative, it must imply somewhat positive; for there are many whose hearts condemn them not, through ignorance of their rule, or oscitancy, self-indulgence, or neglect of themselves. But if after thorough search, with sincerity in the sight of God, our hearts do not condemn, but acquit us, as upright towards Him, not willing to allow ourselves in any ill temper or practice,—such as for instance, this of not loving, or neglecting, our brother,—"then we have confidence," ("liberty of speech," the word literally signifies, which well suits with what follows,) "toward God;" we have nothing to hinder or lie as a bar against us in our recourse to him.

Ver. 22.—And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

It is supposed, where there is that accord with God, that,—what was last and is next after said implies,—there will be no disposition to ask any thing disagreeable to his will or otherwise than as he hath expressed his will about the matter of prayer. And then, "whatsoever we ask, we receive;" that is, are as sure to receive it, in the kind or in equivalence, as if we had it.[2] "Because we keep his commandments;"—that is, this is the cause of our certainty, being the evidence of our state God-ward;[3] not of our receiving the things prayed for, which we only owe to his free promised mercy in Christ.

[1] As 1 Cor. iv. 4. [2] Chap. v. 14. [3] Ps. lxvi. 18, 19.

Ver. 23.—And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

Thus briefly is comprehended the whole of our duty towards God in Christ, and one another.[1]

Ver. 24.—And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him: and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

"He that keepeth his commandments,"—that is, he whose whole soul is thus formed to obediential compliance with the Divine will,—"dwelleth in him;" hath most intimate union with God in Christ; which is evident by that "Spirit given to us," which hath effected both that holy frame and that union.[2]

Chapter IV.

Ver. 1.—Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

"Believe not every spirit;"—that is, not every one pretending to inspiration or a revelation; "spirit," whether good or bad, being put for the person acted thereby. "But try the spirits;" there being a judgment of discretion or discerning common to Christians *de jure*, and which they ought to endeavour for and to use upon such occasions;[3] and the attainment and exercise whereof is, in reference to the great essentials of religion, more facile and sure: as when heretofore, among the Jews, any should attempt the drawing them off from the true God;[4] and so when with Christians it should be endeavoured to tempt them away from Christ, as the "false prophets" or teachers did, now "gone out into the world."

Ver. 2.—Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.

[1] In a like summary as that Eccles. xii. 13.
[2] See John xiv. 23.
[3] Acts xvii. 11; Phil. i. 9, 10; 1 Thess. v. 21.
[4] As Deut. xiii. 1, 2.

He here gives them the general rule, both affirmative and negative, which would suffice them to judge by in their present case; this being the great controversy of that time with the Jews, Whether Jesus were the Messiah? and whether the Messiah were as yet come or no? and with the Gnostics, Whether He were really come in the flesh,—in true human nature? or were not, as to that appearance, a mere phantasm? And he affirms, they that confessed Him so come, were "of God;"—that is, thus far they were in the right, this truth was of God. Of the two litigating parties, this was of God, the other not of God; this took His side, that was against Him. Yea, and they that not only made this true confession, but did also truly confess Him,—that is, sincerely, cordially, practically, so as accordingly to trust in Him, subject and devote themselves to Him,—were born of God, His very children, acted and influenced hereunto by His own Holy Spirit.[1]

Ver. 3.—And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

But on the contrary, concerning them who, against so plain evidence, denied Him, to be so come, the case was plain,—as with the Jews,[2] and with the present heretics, who, denying the true manner, could not but deny the true end of His coming; and who also lived so impure lives as imported the most open opposition and hostility thereto, and so discovered most evidently that antichristian spirit which it was foreknown would show itself in the world.

Ver. 4.—Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

Their being born of God, and their participation of a directive and strengthening influence from him, kept them from being overcome by the plausible notions, the alluring blandishments of the flesh and sense, the terror of perse-

[1] As chap. v. 1, 5; Matt. xvi. 16, 17; 1 Cor. xii. 3. [2] John viii. 24.

cution, used towards them by these antichristian or pseudo-christian tempters; and enabled them to overcome, because the Divine Spirit in them was stronger than the others' lying, impure spirit.

Ver. 5, 6.—They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

He giveth here a further rule whereby to judge of doctrines and teachers; namely, what they severally savour of and tend to. The doctrines and teachers whereby these Christians were assaulted and tempted, were of an earthly savour and gust, tending only to gratify worldly lusts and inclinations, and to serve secular interests and designs; and therefore men only of a worldly spirit and temper were apt to listen and give entertainment to them. On the other hand, says he, in the name of the asserters and followers of true and pure Christianity, comprehended with himself, "We are of God;"—that is, 'Our doctrine and way proceed from God, and tend only to serve, please, and glorify him, and draw all to him; therefore such as "know God,"—that is, are his friends, and converse much with him,—"hear us;" the things we propose and offer are grateful and savoury to them,[1] having manifestly no other aim than to promote serious godliness.' And hereby may "the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error," in matters of this nature, be distinguished;—the one being next of kin to purity, and holiness, and a godly life; the other, to sensuality, and a design only of gratifying the animal life.

Ver. 7.—Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

"Beloved, let us love one another:" In opposition to the malice and cruelty of these enemies to true and pure Christianity, he exhorteth to mutual love,—not limited to themselves, as undoubtedly he did not intend;[2] but that they

[1] As John viii. 47.

[2] See note on chap. iii. 14.

should do their parts towards all others, letting it lie upon them, if it were not reciprocated and mutual. "For love is of God:" this he presses as a further discrimination; nothing being more evidential of relation and alliance to God, than a duly regulated love, which is of Him.

Ver. 8.—He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love.

Yea, since love is his very nature, and that "God is love," those that love, upon the account and in the way above expressed, are born of him, partake from him that excellent and most delectable nature, know him by a transformative knowledge: but they that love not, they are mere strangers to him, and never had to do with him.

Ver. 9.—In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

There could be no higher demonstration of his love.[1]

Ver. 10.—Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

In comparison of this wonderful love of his, in sending his Son to be a sacrifice for our sins, our love to him is not worthy the name of love.

Ver. 11.—Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

We discover little sense of this love of his to us, if we do not so.

Ver. 12.—No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

The essence of God is to our eyes invisible, incomprehensible to our minds; but by yielding ourselves to the power of his love, so as to be transformed by it, and habituated to the exercise of mutual love, we come to know him by the most pleasant and most apprehensible effects, experiencing his indwelling, vital, operative presence and influences, whereby he is daily perfecting this his own likeness and

[1] John iii. 16.

image in us. This is the most desirable way of knowing God, when, though we cannot behold him at a distance, we may feelingly apprehend him nigh us, and in us.

Ver. 13.—Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

The near, inward union between him and us is best to be discerned by the operations of his Spirit, which is the Spirit of all love and goodness.[1]

Ver. 14.—And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world.

He here signifies we are not left at any uncertainties touching that matter of fact, wherein lies this mighty argument for the exercise of mutual love among Christians,—God's having "sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world;" for, as he again inculcates, we testify upon eyesight, having beheld Him and conversed with Him, living and dying.

Ver. 15.—Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

This discourse is most studiously and observably interwoven of these two great things,[2] faith in the Messiah, and the love of one another; as being the principal antidotes against the poisonous insinuations of the apostates.[3]

Ver. 16.—And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Inasmuch as the transformative efficacy of God's love upon us depends upon our certain apprehension of it, he doubles the expression of that certainty, "We have known and believed;" that is, 'We are assured of it, both by experimental effects and by faith:' implying, that by having this conception of God thoroughly settled in our souls, that he "is love,"[4] we shall be so thoroughly changed into his very nature and image as to "dwell in love," as in our own

[1] Chap. iii. 24; Eph. v. 9.
[2] Mentioned in chap. iii. 23.
[3] Of confessing, see note on verse 2.
[4] As was also said, verse 8.

element, or a thing now become wholly connatural to us: which will indeed be, by consequence, to be so intimately united with God, that he and we may truly, (though in a sense most remote from identification, or being made the same,—a horrid notion! not only not inferred by what is here said, but inconsistent with it and refused by it, for things united are thereby implied to be distinct,) be said to "indwell" one another.

Ver. 17.—Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

And by this means,—namely, of our inwardness with God,—doth our love grow to that perfection, that we shall have the most fearless freedom and liberty of spirit in the judgment-day; our hearts no way misgiving to appear before him as a Judge, whose very image we find upon ourselves; he having beforehand made us such even in this world, though in an infinitely inferior degree, as he is,—compositions of love and goodness: or, if "the day of judgment" should mean, as some conceive, of our appearance before human tribunals for his sake, such a temper of spirit must give us the same boldness in that case also.

Ver. 18.—There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

That he proveth from the contrary natures of fear and love. The fear which is of the baser kind, namely, that is servile and depresses the spirit, hath no place with love; but is excluded by it by the same degrees by which that love grows up to perfection, and shall be quite excluded by that love fully perfected: inasmuch as love is a pleasant, fear a tormenting passion, which, as such, while it remains, shows the imperfection of love.

Ver. 19.—We love him, because he first loved us.

His is the fountain love, ours but the stream; his love the inducement, the pattern, and the effective cause of ours. He

that is first in love, loves freely; the other therefore loves under obligation.

Ver. 20.—If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

The greater difficulty here is implied,—through our present dependence upon sense,—of loving the invisible God, than men that we daily see and converse familiarly with. Hence, considering the comprehensiveness of these two things,—the love of God, and of our brother,—that they are the roots of all that duty we owe to God and man, the fulfilling of the whole law,[1] he lets us see the falsehood and absurdity of their pretence to eminent piety and sanctity who neglect the duties of the second table.

Ver. 21.—And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

Both ought to be conjoined, being required both by the same authority.

Chapter V.

Ver. 1.—Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ:" This is not meant of a mere professed, or of a slight and superficial, but of a lively, efficacious, unitive, soul-transforming, and obediential faith in Jesus as the Christ; which is elsewhere made the effect of the regenerating power and grace of God.[2] And as nothing can be more connatural to such a heaven-born faith than the loving of Him that hath begotten us to it, so nothing can be more certainly consequent and agreeable than the loving of them too who are begotten also of the same Father; namely, with a correspondent love to the more excellent characters and image of God upon them than are upon other men.

[1] Matt. xxii. 37—39.

[2] John i. 12, 13.

Ver. 2.—By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

It is not otherwise to be known that we truly love the children of God, as such; for if we do, we must love them upon God's account, in conformity to him and obedience to his commandments; wherefore our true love to them supposes our love to him, and is to be evinced by it.

Ver. 3.—For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

"For this is the love of God;" that is, this is the most lively, certain expression and effect of our love to God, our keeping his commandments, which are so little grievous that true love can make no difficulty of doing so.[1]

Ver. 4.—For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith.

He explains himself,—namely, that to one who is born of God His commandments are not grievous, because such a one, in that divine birth, hath received a life and nature that makes him far superior to this world; exalts him above it, makes him victorious over the worldly spirit,[2] over all worldly desires and fears, and hopes and joys, which are the great hinderances of our obedience to God. "This is the victory;" that is, the instrument, the weapon by which they overcome,—and which virtually includes in itself this victory over the world, as effects are included in the power of their cause,—is their "faith," that principle which in their regeneration, as above, is implanted in them.

Ver. 5.—Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

For that faith, namely, "that Jesus is the Son of God," (or "the Christ,"[3]) fills the soul with so great things concerning him, and the design of his coming among us, and what we are to expect thereupon, as easily turn this world into a contemptible shadow, and deprive it of all its former power over us.

[1] Matt. xi. 30; Ps. xix. 11. [2] As chap. iv. 4. [3] As verse 1.

Ver. 6.—This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

For the explaining of this obscure place, we must proceed by degrees. 1. It is evident that "water and blood" cannot be here meant literally. 2. It is therefore consequent, that they must be intended to signify somewhat or other by way of symbolical representation, or that they must have some mystical meaning. 3. They ought to have such a meaning assigned them as will both be agreeable to the expressions themselves, and to the apostle's present scope and design. 4. It will be very agreeable to the expressions, to understand by "water" the purity of our blessed Lord, and by "blood" his sufferings. 5. His manifest scope and design is, to show the abundantly sufficient credibility of the witnesses and testimony we have to assure us that Jesus was the Christ, or the Messiah, and to induce us to believe this of him with so efficacious and transforming a faith as should evidence our being born of God, and make us so victorious over the world as constantly to adhere to this Jesus by trust and obedience, against all the allurements and terrors of it. 6. This being his scope, it supposeth that the mentioned coming of Jesus as Messiah was for some known end; unto his accomplishment whereof these two, his purity and his sufferings, were apt and certain means; as that they were to be considered under the notion of means, his being said to have come διά, "by" them, doth intimate. And in pursuance of this scope, he must be understood to signify, that his coming so remarkably by these two, did carry with it some very convictive proof and evidence of his being the Son of God and the Messiah, sufficient to recommend him as the most deserving object of such a faith, and render it highly reasonable we should hereupon so trust and obey him, and entirely resign ourselves to his mercy and government. Wherefore, also, 7. This his coming must here be understood in a sense accommodated hereunto, and is therefore in no reason to be taken for the very act or instant, precisely, of his entrance into this world, but to signify

his whole course in it from first to last, a continued motion and agency, correspondent to the intendment of his mission. To the clearing of which notion of his coming, some light may be gained by considering the account which is given[1] of the coming of Antichrist, which is said to be "after Satan," (as it were by his impulsion, and in pursuance of his ends and purposes,) "with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and all deceivableness of unrighteousness;" where it is manifest, "coming" must signify a continued course of doing business. So here, our Lord's coming must signify His continual employment for the despatch of the business about which he was sent. 8. The known business and end for which he was sent, was to reduce and bring back sinners to God. 9. How apt and necessary means these two, his purity and sufferings, were to this end, the whole frame of the gospel shows. His sacrifice of himself in his sufferings, was necessary to our reconciliation,—so he was to come and effect his work "by blood;" his purity was requisite to the acceptableness of his sacrifice,—so it was to be done "by water;" without which, as was wont to be proverbially said among the Hebrews, there could be no sacrifice. 10. For the evidence his coming so remarkably by these two carried with it for the inducing of us to believe him to be the Messiah, with such a faith as whereby we should imitate his purity and rely upon the value of his sufferings, we may see it in the note upon verse 8, where the testimony of these two witnesses, the water and the blood, comes to be given in its own place and order. 11. Nor is it strange the apostle should use these mystical expressions to this purpose, if we consider what might lead him thereto; for we must remember, first, That he was a spectator of our Lord's crucifixion, and then beheld, upon the piercing of His side, the streaming forth of the water and blood; which, it appears, at that time made a very deep impression upon his mind, as his words about it in his writing his Gospel import: "There came out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10.

that he saith true, that ye might believe."[1] That he there lays so great a weight on it imports that he apprehended some great mystery, if not intended, yet very apt to be signified by it. And, secondly, That he was a Jew, and, as is probable, wrote this epistle to Jews, among whom the so frequent ablutions with water, as well as the shedding the blood of sacrifices, were most known things, and intended to typify (what they ought to have understood, and he now intimates) these very things, the purity and dying of the Messiah; —not to insist upon what he had long ere now occasion to observe in the Christian church, baptism and the supper of our Lord, representing in effect severally the same things. Neither was this way of teaching unusual; nor these expressions less intelligible than our Lord's calling himself (as this evangelist also records) "a shepherd," "a door," "a vine," etc.

"And it is the Spirit that beareth witness:" That the Spirit is said to bear witness,[2]

Ver. 7.—For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

Having mentioned the Spirit's testifying in the close of verse 6, he returns to give us in order, in these two verses, the whole testimony of the truth of Christianity, which he reduces to two ternaries of witnesses. The matter of their testimony is the same with that of their faith who are born of God,—"that Jesus is the Son of God" and the Messiah; as may be collected from what was said before,[3] and what is said afterwards.[4] What they believe is no other thing than what these testify. For the first three, "in heaven,"—that is not said, to signify heaven to be the place of their testifying; for though the same thing concerning Jesus be also no doubt testified to the glorious inhabitants of that world, yet that is not the apostle's present scope; but to show what reason we have, who inhabit this world, to believe Jesus to be Christ, and the Son of God. "In heaven," therefore, is to be referred

[1] John xix. 34, 35. [2] See verses 7, 8. [3] Verses 1, 5. [4] Verse 9.

to "three," not to "bear record," or witness; as if the text were read, (which it may as well,) 'There are three in heaven who bear witness;' the design being to represent their immediate testifying from thence unto us, or the glorious, heavenly, majestic manner of their testifying. So the Father testified of the man Jesus, by immediate voice from heaven, at his baptism and transfiguration: "This is my Son," etc. The eternal Word owned its union with him in that glory with which it so eminently clothed his humanity, and which visibly shone through it in the holy mount, whereof this apostle was a spectator, and whereto he seems to refer in his Gospel.[1] "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father;" that is, such as sufficiently testified him to be so, even the very Son of God. And the Holy Ghost testified, descending "as a dove" in a visible glorious appearance upon him, at his baptism also. "And these three are one,"—namely, not only agreeing in their testimony,[2] but in unity of nature: an express testimony of the triune Deity, by whatsoever carelessness or ill design left out of some copies; but sufficiently demonstrated by many most ancient ones, to belong to the sacred text: of which Luc. Brug. Not. *in loc.*, with the other critics, and at large, Dr. Hammond.

Ver. 8.—And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

And for the three that are said to "bear witness on earth," there is, first, "the Spirit;" who, though the Holy Ghost were in the former triad, needs not here to be taken for another spirit, but may be the same, considered under another notion and as testifying in another manner; not transiently and immediately from heaven, as there, but statedly and as *in-acting* instruments here on earth:—extraordinarily, the man Christ Jesus, all his apostles and first disciples, in all the wonderful works which they did for the confirmation of the Christian doctrine; and ordinarily, the whole church of true Christians, for it animates the whole living body of Christ,

[1] Chap. i. 14. [2] As verse 8.

and makes it,—though in an imperfect measure,—by a uniform course of actions tending to God and heaven, an extant visible proof to the world of the truth of that religion which obtains in it, and of His divine power and nature who is the head of it. Next, "the water;" that is, the continual untainted, God-like purity of our Lord Jesus through the whole course of his terrestrial state, manifestly showed him to be the Son of God, an incarnate Deity, inhabiting our world. And lastly, "the blood,"—his suffering of death,—considered in the circumstances, was a most conspicuous, clear testimony and indication who he was; so exactly according to the predictions of the prophets; attended with wonderful amazing concomitants; ending in so glorious a resurrection. And in and with both these "the Spirit," complicating his testimony, did bear witness too, as is intimated,—after the former mention of them both,—in the latter part of verse 6. It testified all along; both in his clear, immaculate life, and in the bloody death in which it assisted him, which it accompanied with so marvellous effects, and out of which at length it fetched him.[1] And that part it took, as being "the Spirit of truth,"[2] and, as it is there expressed in the more emphatical abstract, Truth itself.

Ver. 9.—If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.

A testimony above exception, being wholly divine, as he himself argued.[3]

Ver. 10.—He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

That is, if he truly believe, he hath the effectual impress of this testimony on his own soul; if not, he gives God the lie, as we do to any one whose testimony we believe not.[4]

Ver. 11.—And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

[1] Rom. i. 4. [2] Ver. 6. [3] John v. 36, 37; viii. 13, 14, 17, 18. [4] See John iii. 33.

His testimony that this is his Son and the Christ, imports so much,—that eternal life is in him, as the source and fountain of it; so that he gives it to us in no other way than in and by him.

Ver. 12.—He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

And therefore, that we partake this life or partake it not, as by faith we are united with him or not united.

Ver. 13.—These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

That, discerning their own faith, they might be in no doubt concerning their title to eternal life, and might be thereby encouraged to persevere in the same faith.

Ver. 14.—And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.

Namely, "according to his will," not *negatively*, as it only doth not forbid our praying for or enjoying such and such things, but *positively:* that is, according to his will signified, 1. By his commands; that is, when the matter of our prayers is some spiritual good thing, which was before the matter of our duty,—as when we pray for grace to enable us to be and to do what he requires us, as far as our present state will admit; 2. By his promises, which are more absolute and particular in reference to things of that nature.[1] In reference to things of an inferior nature, of a conditional tenor; or more general,—the things promised coming under the common notion of good things, not in themselves only, but for us in present circumstances; which, whether they be or no, he reserves to himself the liberty of determining, and doth only promise them if they *be;* and *so* we are only to pray for them: for that is praying, according to what signification he hath given us of his will in such cases. And so we are always sure to be heard in the *former* case, in the very

[1] Matt. v. 6; Luke xi. 13.

particular kind, about which his will is expressly made known beforehand.

Ver. 15.—And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

In the *latter* *case*,—in that, or somewhat equivalent, or better: for if he determine that thing to be best for us, all circumstances considered, we shall have it; if he determine otherwise, (supposing we pray according to his will,) we desire it not,—for every one intends good to himself when he prays for any thing, not hurt. And God answers his children according to that general meaning of their prayers, not always according to the particular, which may be often a much mistaken meaning: according whereto, supposing the thing would be really and in truth hurtful,—and God's judgment is always according to truth,—they constructively pray to be denied it; and the denial is the equivalent, nay, the better thing than what they particularly prayed for: and so they truly have their petitions.[1] Nor can any be understood to pray according to God's will as the rule, if it be not to his glory as the end; as the order and connection of petitions shows in that admirable platform prescribed by our Lord himself. And is it possible to be the sense of any one that hath a sincere heart in prayer, that God would gratify him against himself? Therefore that latitude allowed the apostles[2] must be understood to respect the service of the Christian interest, and is to be limited thereby, as some of the expressions show.

Ver. 16.—If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it.

"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death;" namely, that appears not obstinate and incurable. "He shall ask;" that is, with "confidence."[3] But "there is a sin unto death;"—that is, which doth not barely deserve

[1] See chap. iii. 22.

[2] John xiv. 13, 14; xv. 16; xvi. 23, etc.

[3] As ver. 14.

death, as all sin doth, nor which argues a person to be probably in a present state of death or unregeneracy, which the sinful ways may do of many that never made profession; but of such as have apostatized from a former specious profession into heresy and debauchery, and continue obstinate therein against all methods of recovery; that are even "twice dead,"[1] etc. "I do not say that he shall pray for it;" that is, I do not give that encouragement to pray for such with that hope and expectation of success, as for others; though he doth not simply forbid praying for them neither.

Ver. 17.—All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

He intimates they should be cautious of all sin, especially more deliberate, which the word ἀδικία seems to import; but would not have them account that every sin would make their case so hopeless as such sin which he called sinning unto death, would do.

Ver. 18.—We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

The great advantage is here signified of the regenerate, who, by the seed remaining in them,[2] are furnished with a self-preserving principle; with the exercise whereof they may expect that co-operation of a gracious divine influence by which they shall be kept, so as "that wicked one," the great destroyer of souls, shall not mortally touch them, to make them sin unto death.

Ver. 19.—*And* we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

And this he doth not exclusively assume to himself, but expresses his charitable confidence of them to whom he writes, that it was their privilege, in common with him, to be thus "of God," or born of him; notwithstanding the generality of men were under the power of that before-mentioned "wicked one," (as that phrase may be read,) or in the midst of all impurity and malignity.

[1] As Jude 12.

[2] As chap. iii. 9.

Ver. 20.—And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

It is here signified how satisfying a knowledge and certainty sincere Christians had that Christ was indeed come, by that blessed effect they found upon themselves; namely, a clear and lively light shining, by his procurement and communication, into their minds; whereby they had other apprehensions, more vivid and powerful than ever before, of "the true God,"[1] so as thereby to be drawn into union with him, and to be "in him:" or, which in effect is the same thing,—so entire is the oneness between the Father and the Son,—"we are in his Son Jesus Christ;" who also "is the true God,"[2] and "eternal life," as he is called *by John*.[3]

Ver. 21.—Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

That is, from those idolatrous communions with the Gentiles in their worship and festivals, in their temples; which these pseudo-christians had latitude enough for, as appears by the apostle St. Paul's discourses,[4] especially if any danger did urge: wherein, instead of that communion with the Father and the Son, which[5] he was inviting them to, they should have "fellowship with devils," as that other apostle tells his Corinthians.[6] And he might also have reference to the peculiar idolatries, which this sort of men are noted to have been guilty of towards their great sect-master.

THE SECOND EPISTLE.

Ver. 1.—The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth.

"The elder;"—a general name of office, fitly appropriated with eminency here, he being the only apostle, probably, now

[1] As John xvii. 3. [2] As John i. 1. [3] Chap. i. 2.
[4] 1 Cor. viii; x. 14—33. [5] Chap. i. 3. [6] 1 Epist. x. 20, 21.

surviving on earth. "The elect lady:" This appears to have been some noted person, whom both her singular piety and rank in the world made eminent, and capable of having great influence for the support of the Christian interest; which her general value with all that had "known the truth," (that is, the Christians in those parts,) shows. The opinion that a church is intended by this appellation, had it greater probability, is of no great importance, and need not here be disputed.

Ver. 2.—For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.

The indwelling of evangelical truth, which is here meant, signifies its deep radication and powerful transforming efficacy in the soul, so as to be productive of holiness;[1] than which nothing can be a greater inducement, among Christians, of mutual love.

Ver. 3.—Grace be with you, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Such salutations see explained where they have formerly occurred.

Ver. 4.—I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

Some of her sons, it is probably conjectured he had met with, upon their occasions at Ephesus, where, it is thought, he now resided, and found them to have a good savour of religion, and to walk according to rule; which was matter of great joy to him.

Ver. 5.—And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

He inculcates that great precept, of which see 1 John ii. 7, 8.

Ver. 6.—And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

[1] As John xvii. 17.

From this particular command he passes to what is more general, requiring in all things a strict and unanimous adherence to the pure and primitive doctrine of the gospel, which would be the best expression of love to God and the true centre and bond of love to one another.[1]

Ver. 7.—For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

See 1 John ii. 18, 22; iv. 3.

Ver. 8.—Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

Such changes of the person as we here find, are neither unusual, nor, in exhortation, inelegant; but some copies read in the two latter clauses "ye." He presses to constancy in the true, incorrupt Christian profession. "That we receive a full reward;"—that the expected recompence be not lost, in the whole or in any part.[2]

Ver. 9.—Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

See 1 John ii. 23.

Ver. 10, 11.—If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

Such as bring any contrary doctrine[3] ought not to be harboured or countenanced by any encouraging salutation, lest we involve ourselves in the participation of their guilt.[4]

Ver. 12.—Having many things to write unto you, I would not *write* with paper and ink; but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

The latter "write" is not in the Greek text; but the words bear this sense, that having many things to write, I would not by "paper and ink" impart them to you, (the expression being elliptical), but hope to come, etc.

[1] As 1 John v. 1, 3. [2] As Gal. iii. 3, 4. [3] As Gal. i. 8. [4] 1 Tim. v. 22.

Ver. 13.—The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

They were, it is probable, with him at Ephesus, and took the occasion by him now writing to transmit their salutations. "Amen:" This concluding "Amen" imports his sincerity in what he had written.

THE THIRD EPISTLE.

Ver. 1, 2.—The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

This "Gaius" was well known by the apostle, not only to be a stedfast professor of the truly Christian, uncorrupted faith, (which is implied in his avowing his love to him "in the truth," or upon the Christian account), but to be so improved and well-grown a Christian, that he reckons he might well make the prosperous state of his soul the measure of all the other prosperity he could wish unto him.

Ver. 3, 4.—For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

"The truth" is familiarly used to signify the pure doctrine of Christianity, which in its principal design aims at correspondent practice. That his "children," that is, such as had been converted to Christ by his ministry,[1] of whom it appears Gaius was one, did "walk in the truth,"—an apt expression of such correspondent practice,—was greatest matter of joy to this holy apostle; especially when the godly lives of such, to whose conversion he had been instrumental, were so observable as to gain them a testimony from all others that knew them,—as it was in the present instance.

Ver. 5.—Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers.

Charity to Christians is reckoned fidelity to Christ, being

[1] As 1 Cor. iv. 15.

shown to them upon the Christian account; which is intimated to have been done by this pious person, who so kindly treated "the brethren, and strangers,"—that is, even though they were strangers.

Ver. 6.—Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well.

"After a godly sort;"—that is, after a manner (as the Greek expression is) worthy of God: namely, as becomes them who bear the name of God, as thou dost; or are intent upon his work, as they are,—which latter notion is confirmed by what follows.

Ver. 7, 8.—Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.

"They went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles:" It thence appears these were Jews, who went out from their own country to serve the interest of the gospel,—which therefore he should serve in helping them.

Ver. 9, 10.—I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church.

"I wrote unto the church:" This was probably some church of which Gaius was *a member*. "Diotrephes,"—one who had received or usurped some office or authority in it, to so ill a purpose, as when he had no inclination to be hospitable himself to fellow-Christians, prevented others from being so; and upon pretence of the little differences of these Jewish from the Gentile Christians, excluded them their communion.

Ver. 11.—Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

"Follow not,"—Μὴ μιμοῦ: By "following" here, he means imitation;—that is, the deformity of evil appearing in the practice of some, and the beauty of true goodness in others, (examples being given in both sorts,[1]) he exhorts to decline the former and imitate the other; and enforces the exhortation by the weightiest arguments. "He that doeth good,"—a doer of good, one made up of kindness and benignity, as the context draws the sense to that special kind of goodness; ἀγαθοποιῶν and κακοποιῶν, signify doing well or ill from a fixed, prevailing habit,—[2] "is of God;" is allied to heaven, born of God, His offspring. "But he that doeth evil hath not seen God;"—an evil-doer, on the other hand, such a one as is a composition of spite, envy, and malice, is a mere stranger to Him, hath not been *with*, or known, or had to do with Him.

Ver. 12.—Demetrius hath good report of all *men*, and of the truth itself; yea, and we *also* bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

Some eminent Christian, whom he could with confidence recommend as a pattern.

Ver. 13.—I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee.

Having much more to say,[3] he resolved on a more immediate, grateful, and effectual way of imparting and even impressing his sense,—as the term "writing" is used in a greater latitude.[4]

Ver. 14.—But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace *be* to thee. *Our* friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

"Speak face to face," στόμα πρὸς στόμα,—namely, by oral conference, which he hoped ere long to have opportunity for. He concludes with the usual Christian salutations.

[1] Verses 9, 12. [2] 1 John iii. 7, 8. [3] As 2 John 12.
[4] Prov. iii. 3, and elsewhere.

A SERMON

ON THE

THANKSGIVING-DAY,

DECEMBER 2, 1697.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORD HAVERSHAM.

I OFFER this discourse, my honoured lord, to your perusal, in confidence that the subject and design of it will be so far grateful to your lordship, as in some degree to atone for the imperfections of the management. I believe it will not offend against your lordship's very accurate judgment of things, that I have not been so swayed by an authority which hath signified much in our age, as to represent the natural state of man as a state of war; which either must signify man in his original constitution to have been a very ill-natured creature, or must signify his nature to be less ancient than himself. For I cannot doubt but the author of that maxim would have disdained *their* way of speaking, who by nature mean vice; or to have been guilty of so pious a thought, that God at first made man any better thing than we find him. I shall the less passionately lament my infelicity in losing the good opinion of men of that sentiment, if I stand right in your lordship's; not knowing any of your rank and figure in the world with whom I count it a greater honour to agree in judgment, or do less fear to disagree.

In matters of secular concernment, it becomes me not to profess any judgment at all besides the public; unto which, in things of that nature, every private man's ought to be, and is professedly, resigned. Yet within that compass, notwithstanding the just esteem your lordship hath of the noble endowments, which do then illustriously shine in the military profession when there is a necessity of their being reduced to practice, I apprehend that otherwise your lordship hath no more grateful thoughts of war than I; nor more ungrateful of the necessary means of preserving

peace. That which is the reproach of human nature could never originally belong to it; nor can anything more expose its ignominious depravation, than it should ever be necessary the sword should dispute right, and the longest decide it.

In the matters of religion, which is every man's business, and whose sphere, as it is higher, must be proportionably wider and more comprehensive, I hope it is your lordship's constant care to add unto clearness and rectitude of thought the pleasantness of taste; and that you apprehend it to consist, not more in a scheme of notions than of vital principles; and that your love to it proceeds from hence, that you relish it and feel you live by it. You are hereby fortified against the reproach that attends it from *their* contempt of it who are every day assaulting heaven, and would have the war not ended, but only transferred thitherward. That which some vent and others admire as wit, even paganism itself has condemned as foolishness. Your lordship is in no more danger to be altered hereby from your chosen course, than a man in his health and senses, by satires against eating and drinking. I reckon your lordship is so much taken up with the great things of religion, as to be less taken with the adventitious things men have thought fit to affix to it. I do not more emulate your lordship in anything than a disdain of bigotry; nor more honour anything I discern in you than true catholicism.

And, recounting what things and persons do truly belong to a church, I believe your lordship is not professedly of a larger church, as counting it too large for you, but too narrow; and that you affect not to be of a self-distinguished party. Nor, besides the opportunity of avowing the just honour and obligations I have to your lordship and your noble consort, with my sincere concern for your hopeful and numerous offspring, did anything more invite this address to your lordship, than the agreeableness of such your sentiments to the mind and spirit of,

My most honoured lord,

Your lordship's most justly devoted, and

Most faithful, humble servant,

JOHN HOWE.

A SERMON.

"The LORD will bless his people with peace." The whole verse is, "The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace."—*Ps.* xxix. 11.

YOU so generally know the occasion of this our solemn assembly at this time, that none can be in doubt concerning the suitableness of this portion of Scripture for our present consideration.

Our business is to celebrate the Divine goodness in preserving our king abroad, and restoring him home in safety, after he had been the happy instrument of bringing about that peace, which puts a period to a long-continued, wasting, and dubious war; under which we, and all Europe, have groaned these divers years. And if we find the favourable workings of Providence to concur and fall in with a divine word, pointing them to God's own people; as this for instance, "The Lord will bless his people with peace;" that is, he will vouchsafe this blessing to his own people in the fittest season, as it must be understood;—this adds so much the more grateful and pleasant relish to the mercy we are this day to acknowledge. It cannot but do so with right minds, unto which nothing is more agreeable than to desire and covet such favour as God shows to his own people, and to be made glad with his inheritance;[1] from an apprehension that there must be somewhat very peculiar in such mercy as God vouchsafes to his own,—to a people peculiar and select, severed and set apart for himself from the rest of men.

[1] Ps. cvi. 4, 5.

It is true, indeed, that peace abstractly considered is neither the appropriate nor the constant privilege of such a people; they neither alone enjoy it, nor at all times, when it is brought about even *for* them; they have other partakers: but yet such favours of Providence as are of larger extent, and reach to many besides God's own people, have a more peculiar, benign aspect upon them; and are attended, with reference to them, with such consequences as wherein others, without being made of this people of his, are not sharers with them. Some intimation there is of this in this psalm, which the title speaks a psalm of David; and which some think to refer unto the wars managed by him in his time with the Moabites, signified by the wilderness of Kadesh; and the Syrians, signified by the cedars of Lebanon; of whom he speaks in the prophetic style, as if, by the terrible and amazing appearances of God's power against them, they were thunderstruck, like the trees of a forest, or as the hinds that are wont to inhabit amongst them. And so it is concluded and shut up with this epiphonema in the end of the psalm, "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace;" that is, he is in war their strength, and their felicity in peace: in war he is the author of all that power wherewith they are enabled to oppose and overcome potent enemies; and in peace he is their truly felicitating good, and makes them by his own vouchsafed presence, a truly blessed people.

It is the latter of these, "Peace," unto which the present occasion confines us. And concerning that, we might in the first place, note from the text, that wheresoever it is brought about, God is the author of it: "God will bless his people with peace." That title which the Scripture gives him, "The God of peace," with the many expressions of like import wherewith it abounds, can leave *them* in no doubt concerning the Divine influence and agency in bringing about the grateful intervals of peace after desolating, bloody wars, who have any reverence for the sacred oracles. And indeed, to insist upon such a subject as this, in a case so plain, so

acknowledged amongst men who believe the Bible, were to reproach the auditory, as if it were made up of sceptics and atheists; or of them that did not believe this world was made by God, or that it was made by him only by some casual stroke and without design; that he cared not for his reasonable, intelligent creatures, when he had made them, what became of them, nor did at all concern himself in their most considerable concernments. I shall not therefore insist upon this, which seems rather slid in and supposed in the text, or taken for granted: for among a people in visible relation and subjection to God, it had been as great an incongruity industriously to assert and prove such a thing, as it would be by an elaborate discourse to prove that there is a sun in the firmament, unto men that continually partake and enjoy his light and influences; and to whose sense the vicissitudes and distinctions of day and night, by his presence and absence, are brought under constant notice every twenty-four hours.

I shall therefore, I say, pass on to what appears more directly to be the design of the text, and that seems to be twofold: — first, to represent to us in general the great blessing of peace, wherein when God sees it fit, he is pleased to make his own people partakers with others: secondly, because it is not without design that it is said he will bless "his people" with peace, unto whom it is plain this alone is not an appropriate privilege; it seems further designed to intimate, and couch in, the concurrence and concomitancy of such things as superadded to peace, will make it a complete blessing: "The Lord will bless his people with peace." He will give them peace so and upon such terms, and with such concomitants and consequences, that to them it shall prove a real and a full blessing. These two things therefore, I intend to insist upon;—to show you how valuable a good, and in the large and common sense, a blessing, peace is, as it stands in opposition to bloody and desolating wars; and then I shall show you what additions and concomitants are necessary to make it a complete blessing, such as may be appropriate and peculiar to God's own people: and so make use of the whole.

First. I shall show you briefly, how valuable a good, peace is in itself, as it stands opposed unto bloody and destructive wars. And this will best be seen by stating and viewing it in that opposition, and by representing to you somewhat of the horror of war; which we may do by viewing it in its causes, in itself, and in its dismal consequence, wherewith it is wont to be attended.

Consider it in its *causes;* and they are principally these two, the wickedness of men and the just vengeance of God thereupon. These two, concurring and falling in together, must be understood to be the causes of so great a calamity among men in this world; and I shall only consider these two in their complication, and not speak to them distinctly and separately. Very plain it is that war is a mark of the apostasy, and stigmatizes man as fallen from God, in a degenerate, revolted state; it is the horrid issue of men's having forsaken God, and of their being abandoned by him to the hurry of their own furious lusts and passions; the natural and the penal effect of their having severed themselves and broken loose from the Divine government. "From whence are wars? Are they not from your lusts?"[1] God most justly punishes men's injustice, not by infusing malignity,—which he needs not,—into their minds and natures; and which it is impossible he can be the author of, whose very nature itself is goodness, and purity, and love: but having forsaken him, rebelled against him, disclaimed him as their ruler, refused any longer to be subject to him, they are forsaken of him, and left to take vengeance for it on one another; of which there cannot be a greater instance than that, when controversies do arise between men and men, between nation and nation, kingdom and kingdom, one people and another, it is presently to be decided by a bloody sword. This speaks a monstrous degeneracy in the intellectual world and from the original rectitude that belongs to the nature of man, which, in his primitive state, did stand in a temperament of reason and love. That there

[1] James iv. 1.

should be differences about *meum* and *tuum* in a creature of that constitution, is itself a horrid thing; but then that such differences are to be determined only by violence, that presently they must hereupon run into war, good God! what an indication is this, that reason, wisdom, justice, and love, are fled from this earth! And it speaks rebellion against God in the highest kind; it is a subversion of the most fundamental law of his kingdom over the intelligent world,—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, with all thy might; and thy neighbour as thyself."

It is impossible there should be any such thing as war in the world but by the violation of this most fundamental Divine law, the principal and most important thing that his government does as it were consist in, over reasonable creatures,—their loving him aboye all, and one another as themselves. This law observed, must make this earth another heaven; this law violated and broken, makes it another hell. Men being fallen from God, and having lost their acquaintance with him, and all relish of divine things, think to repair their loss out of this sensible world, whereof no man thinks he hath enough; desire of more blinds their eyes, that they cannot judge of right and wrong. Hence every man's cause is right in his own eyes; appetite is the only measure they judge by; and power (whatsoever of it any one can grasp) the instrument by which they execute their perverse judgment. A dismal spectacle and subject of contemplation to the inhabitants of the purer and more peaceful regions! to behold a divine offspring, the sons of God, now transformed into sons of the earth, and tearing in pieces one another, for what some possess and others covet! Yea, and to a calm, uninterested spectator on our own globe, this can be no grateful prospect; to view the history of all times and nations, and take notice how full it is of such tragedy: countries from age to age made Aceldamas, "fields of blood," on this account of extending or confining empire and dominion, of invading another's or defending one's own!

But hereupon it is not strange, when a world of intelligent, reasonable creatures are thus gone off from God, and in rebellion against him in the most fundamental part of his government, that he suffers them to be the executioners of his just wrath upon one another. And if we thus look upon war, first in this its complicated causes, it is the opprobrium, the reproach of human nature, of intelligent, reasonable creatures.

But next look upon it *in itself;* and what is it but the destruction of human lives, of creatures made after the image of God? of whom he has so high a value, and whose lives, even for that very reason, he is pleased to fence and secure by a severe law: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man." But here is a formed design of destroying human lives by multitudes,—lives of creatures bearing the image of God! And by how much the more necessary this is in many cases, so much the more grievous and calamitous a thing it is; that when to cut off and destroy by multitudes so precious things as human lives, is tragical and horrid, not to do it is so much worse! Yea, that war itself is become an art, and that the valour and skill which belong to it are laudable excellencies, is all aggravation of the sadness of this case.

And if we do consider the *consequences and effects* which do ensue upon such war, how full of horror and frightfulness are they; and those most of all that are least of all thought on, and that lie most out of view! For besides that property is gone, and no man knows what to call his own, laws lose their force, magistrates their authority and reverence, civil government is disobeyed and despised, common order is violated and turned into confusion, families torn in pieces, countries laid waste and desolate, towns and cities sacked, ravaged, and made ruinous heaps;—besides all this I say, the sacred rites and mysteries of religion are neglected and profaned, its holy solemnities interrupted, worshipping assemblies are broken up: men have little opportunity left them to mind their great concerns with God, and for another world; care

for immortal souls, when it is most necessary, is thrown out of doors; and reasonable creatures, that should be employed in adoring and worshipping their great Creator, the God of their lives, are employed in designing the mutual destruction of one another's lives; and it may be, that is least considered which carries the most horror in it,—that multitudes are hurried down to perdition, neither dreaded by themselves nor apprehended by the destroyer; souls are passing in shoals into eternity, they not considering it who are sent, nor they that send them! And what sport doth this make for devils, those envious, apostate spirits, that first drew men into a like apostasy! that when God had given this earth to the children of men,—assigning to themselves a worse abode amidst infernal darkness and flames,—they should be tearing one another in pieces about this their portion under the sun, making God's bounty to them the occasion of their doing all manner of violence to one another! that the prince of the apostasy, the usurping god of this world, should have the opportunity of beholding man, sometime by Divine grant the lord of it, now its slave and his captive by it; led by him at his will into whatsoever is most repugnant to the will and the very nature of his Maker! that whereas he was at first made after God's own image, a God-like creature, resembling his Maker, especially in spirituality and love, he now more resembles in sensuality beasts, and in malignity devils, and both by an inordinate love of this world; the friendship whereof, and a mind carnalized by it, is enmity against God;[1] and whereof also, because every man thinks his own share too little, he becomes any one's enemy that hath more of it than himself.

And thus have devils the pleasure of beholding men, by this very gift and expression of God's love and kindness to them, transformed into enmity and hatred of himself and one another; forsaken of him and destroying each other, and hastening once more into their horrid society; that as they were accomplices with them in their first rebellion, they may

[1] James iv. 4; Rom. viii. 7.

be partakers and associates with them in woe and torment. The most dismal part of the story is that which lies most out of sight.

Now let all this be considered and put together, and surely peace is a valuable thing; it speaks man in some degree returned to himself and in a right mind, when he can agree and be content to let another live quiet and unmolested by him, one man another man, and one nation another nation. Thus far does peace appear a blessing apart and by itself, a valuable good: and according to the common notion and estimate, it may be called a blessing wherewith God blesses his people in common with others. But we are further to consider,—

Secondly. What things are requisite to make this a real and a complete blessing, capable of being appropriated unto God's own peculiar people; which seems also to be intended here: "The Lord will bless his people with peace." In speaking to this, I shall do these two things: mention the requisites themselves, and show their requisiteness; or show what is requisite to make external peace a real and peculiar blessing, and then show you upon what account the condition and concomitancy of such things are requisite.

I. I shall show you the things that are requisite:—

1. Such peace as we have been hitherto speaking of, is then truly a blessing, when there is in conjunction with it a very copious effusion of the Spirit of God; in such a concomitancy peace will make a people a blessed people. When, after such a calamitous dispensation was over and at an end as we read of in Ezekiel,[1]—wherein God is said to hide his face,[2] and many of his people were carried into captivity, and many fell by the sword,—it comes at length to this, he will no more hide his face, or cover it with so ireful and gloomy aspects and appearances that it cannot be comfortably beheld, it is for this very reason,—because he pours forth his Spirit upon the whole house of Israel.[3] 'Pouring forth' signifies a copious communication; and if the Spirit of God be copiously communicated, the best of blessings are in great abundance

[1] Chap. xxxix. [2] Verse 23. [3] As it is in ver. 29 of that chap.

contained in it: which will infer, or countervail, whatsoever is valuable or needful besides to make the state of such a people a blessed state.

2. It will be so, when the gospel of peace has its free course and a large spread in the world; when in conjunction with beating of "swords into ploughshares and spears into pruninghooks," the "law goes forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem;" and nations shall say, "Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his statutes."[1] And,—

3. When, according to the dictate of Divine wisdom, kings do reign, and princes decree justice;[2] when God's people have judges as at the first, counsellors as at the beginning,[3]—able men, men of truth, fearing God and hating covetousness;[4] when he is pleased to set kings on the throne that scatter the wicked with their eyes, and so to establish the throne in righteousness; when there is a design driven by those that bear the civil sword, the sword of justice, to be "a terror to evil-doers, but a praise to them that do well;" so as it may be said upon this account, they are the ministers of God for good, whom he has been pleased to set in such stations.

4. When God gives pastors after his own heart, that are able, and do make it their business, to feed his people with knowledge and understanding; when he inspirits such to cry mightily, to warn men off from sin; when watchmen, set over his people, are faithful in the business of their station, at once both to save their people and themselves from having their blood required at the hands of either: this will make a peaceful state, a happy state; it will contribute a great deal towards it. And again,—

5. When hereupon wickedness languishes, the lusts of men droop and wither; there is some visible restraint, if there be not a universal mortification, of such fruits of the flesh as those that are spoken of,—"adultery, fornication, unclean-

[1] As in that of Micah iv. 2, 3. [2] As Prov. viii. 15. [3] Isa. i. 26. [4] Exod. xviii. 21.

ness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like,"[1]—that are inconsistent with a share in the inheritance of the kingdom of God, as it after follows: this does much to the making a peaceful state of things, a blessed state: it takes away much of the occasion of further controversy between God and such a people. But,—

6. When there is a very great diffusion of a holy, new nature, which carries the matter higher, and is a great addition, though in certain conjunction with the former; as it is when the lusts and works of the flesh do cease to be reigning and rampant among them who live under the gospel, through the victorious and more powerful operation of the Spirit of grace breathing in it. For then, by the influence of the same Spirit, not only such vicious inclinations are plucked up by the roots as certainly withstand a people's felicity, but such positive principles are implanted as tend to promote it. Yet since this conjunction is not constant, but such insolences of wickedness as more directly tend to make a people miserable may be repressed by inferior causes, I therefore more expressly add, that *then* peace may be reckoned a certain and a full blessing, when with it we behold a divine offspring continually rising up, of men appearing to be born of God and to have received a God-like nature,—apt to do good and become blessings to the world; when there is a rising generation of such, not proselyted to this or that party, but to real, substantial godliness and Christianity; when multitudes are thus turned unto the Lord; when there are numerous conversions, a new creation is springing up in visible and multiplied instances, so as that holiness comes to be both an extensive and illustrious thing; when multitude comes to give reputation to serious religion; when it is no longer a reproach to be a visible fearer of God, because generally men are so; when it is looked upon as no fashionable thing to be a despiser of God

[1] Gal. v. 19.

and heaven, and to breathe out contempt of the Divine power that gave us breath. And,—

7. When hereupon the Divine government obtains and takes place in the minds and consciences of men; when his authority is owned with reverential submission. Then God does bless a people when his fear spreads far and near: "God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him."[1] And again,—

8. When there is a manifest power and prevalency of Divine love amongst men that bear the same name of Christians; when that peace of God rules in their hearts unto which they are all called in one body; when they observedly "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;" when they have peace one towards another, so as that it may be seen that they are all the sons of peace, the children of the same Father who has conveyed it into them, as part of that Divine nature which he communicates to the regenerate seed; when there is a natural propensity to one another,—that they can no more violate and tear that vital bond of love and peace that is among them than they can endure to tear their own flesh or pluck out their own eyes; when peace among Christians appears to be a connatural thing, not the product of conveniency and prudential considerations only; but a nature which none can more endure to counteract than to offer violence to themselves,—a thing which nature admits not, whose laws never allow it to act against itself. And,—

9. When, upon all this, God appears to be reconciled unto such a people; for in his favour is life. When all these things do concur, as so many indications of his being at peace with them; that is, that he has entirely forgiven them all former offences, that their sins and iniquities he remembers no more: and these concur with such things as partly make, and partly argue them, the objects of his delight; that he has written his law in their hearts, he has put his Spirit into them, he has made them a company of God-like creatures,—like himself, whose very nature is love; they are

[1] As in that Ps. lxvii., the latter end.

his living resemblances in that very respect, expressing herein his virtues who has "called them out of darkness into his own glorious and marvellous light:" hereupon such a people may reckon themselves secure of God's own presence; he is in the midst of them, and his glory ceases to hover, becomes with them a fixed thing, settles its station, as not about to discontinue or remove; their land may now be called the land of Immanuel, and bears the inscription, "God with us;" the tabernacle of God is with them, and he is resolved to dwell with them and be their God, and avow them before all the world for his peculiar people. After the many things that do concur together in an inferior kind, as the concomitants of a merely external peace,—as that their sons grow up as plants, their daughters are so many polished corner-stones that join together the walls of a palace, that their garners be full, their sheep numerous, their oxen strong, and that there be no complaining in their streets,—after all these things it is subjoined: "Yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord." All the fore-mentioned things alone, will never make a blessing worthy of a people peculiar to God; but when it can be said that the Lord is their God, they are a happy people indeed.[1] Such as these are the things requisite to make peace a complete blessing. But now we are,—

II. To show you the requisiteness of the concurrence and concomitancy of such things to the mentioned purpose; or how it may appear that such things as these are necessary to complete this blessing, or to make it a truly valuable or a special blessing. In order hereto, note,—

1. That there is such a thing as a special blessing, very distinguishable from such blessings as are merely common. We read of one Jabez,[2] said to be more honourable than his brethren. And somewhat very remarkable (as we are to reckon, when to the Divine wisdom it was thought fit to be inserted amidst a genealogical discourse,) is further said of him; namely, that he "called on the God of Israel, saying,

[1] Ps. cxliv. 12, 15. [2] 1 Chron. iv. 9, 10.

Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed," etc.; and it is added, "God granted that which he requested." It seems, besides what goes under the common notion of blessing, he reckoned there was somewhat more peculiar, which he calls blessing indeed. There is a known Hebraism in that expression: what we read, "Bless me indeed," is "Bless me in blessing me;"—as much as to say, 'Let me have a blessing within a blessing; let me have that blessing whereof the other is but a *cortex*, the outside; let me have that blessing that is wrapped up and enclosed in the external blessing.' And because it is said, "And God granted his request," we have reason to understand it was somewhat very peculiar that God vouchsafed unto him; and that account which some give us has a look that way;—that God vouchsafed him somewhat more extraordinary in the kind of mental and intellectual endowments: for we are otherwise informed, that this Jabez became a noted doctor among the Jews, and that the city, called after his name, was thereupon afterwards the residence of such as were most learned in their laws.[1] That is to be blessed indeed, to have those things conferred that do reach the mind and affect the inner man; to be blessed with spiritual blessings from the heavenly places.[2] There is a spiritual sort of blessing that may be enclosed in the external blessing, and particularly in this of peace, which, while it is common to the people of God with other men, is itself not common.

2. I further note, that the things I have mentioned to you, they are of that special kind; they are either immediate spiritual blessings or subservient to such; whereupon now we may, from several considerations, evince to you that without them such an external good as this of peace is not a complete blessing.

i. It is no argument of God's special favour. The best and most valuable blessings are from the εὐδοκία θελήματος,—"the good pleasure of his will."[3] Other men may enjoy external benefits, may both prosper in war and flourish in

[1] Vatabl. apud Critic. [2] As in that Eph. i. 3. [3] Eph. i. 3—5.

peace, as well, and often more than God's own people. You read of a time wherein the whole earth is said to be at rest and quiet;[1] therefore mere peace is no mark of special Divine favour, and so is not, abstractly considered, a complete blessing, not a self-desirable thing.

ii. Men are not made by it the better men. They may enjoy peace, and being carnal-minded men before, may still continue so; as great strangers to God as they were, as vain and sensual, as profligate and licentious, as useless in the world, as mischievous, every way as ill men as ever. And,—

iii. They may by mere external peace become so much the worse men; that may be an occasion to them of their growing worse and worse: "The prosperity of fools" (that is, of wicked men) "slays and destroys them."[2] It is an observation that runs through the course of time, that as wars at length beget an enforced peace, so peace infers free trade and commerce; and *that*, plenty; and *that*, pride and wantonness; so these run us back in an easy but unhappy circle to be as we were,—in war again. And if that prove not the present or the speedy consequence, *that* ensues which is worse than war, unless God vouchsafe that other sort of blessing which will influence and better men's minds. Vice springs up in the more fattened soil; men's lusts will soon prove more oppressive tyrants than they can have freed themselves from by the most just and most prosperous war, and will subdue them to a far viler and more ignoble servitude. An ingenious writer[3] of those affairs observes, that the former Scipio opened the way to the Roman power, the latter to their luxury; their virtue languished, and they were conquered by their own vices who before could conquer the world. That noted moralist[4] says, 'Infirmi est animi non posse pati divitias,'—'It is a weak mind that cannot bear a prosperous condition:' but where are there minds strong enough to bear it, if they be not blessed from above with somewhat better than that prosperity itself?

iv. Men may notwithstanding mere external peace, be as

[1] Isa. xiv. 7. [2] Prov. i. 32. [3] Vell. Patercul. [4] Sen.

miserable in this and in the other world as if they had never known it; and much more, if by it they have been the more wicked. I beseech you, consider; are they a blessed people, or is that a blessed man, between whom and eternal misery there is but a breath? He may but breathe another breath, and be in the midst of flames! Is he happy this moment, that may be as miserable as any devil the next? Those things can only be complete blessings to any, that are inseparable ones, and that will make them for ever blessed. For me to have but such a blessing as does not make me blessed,—what an unblessed blessing is this! A philosopher can tell you, blessedness cannot be a thing separable from myself,—not a χωριστόν τι;[1] it can much less be such a thing as may leave me miserable to all eternity, least of all what may make me so, by degenerating into a curse.[2]

Therefore these are demonstrations that mere external peace, without such additions as you have heard of, can never be a complete blessing; nor such as can be understood vouchsafed to the people of God as their ultimate and consummative felicity. It must in the meantime be acknowledged, that as a people may belong to God externally, more than another people, and may sometime be externally more reformed than at other times; so peace, with other external good things, may thereupon be afforded them as less expressive marks of God's favour, and approbation of their more regular course: and, by the tenor of God's particular covenant with the people of Israel, might more certainly be expected so to be. Yet this is a state wherein it is not reasonable or safe for any finally to acquiesce.

I therefore now come to the promised USE, which will correspond to the two general heads I have been discoursing of: to let you see what cause of thanksgiving we have in reference to the former,—the blessing of peace abstractly considered; and what cause of supplication we have in reference to the latter,—the additions that are requisite to make it a complete blessing.

[1] Arist. [2] As Mal. ii. 2.

1. As to the former: Since peace is so valuable a thing, considered apart, as you have heard it is, this points out to us the matter of thanksgiving, for which this day is appointed; that God has preserved our king amidst so innumerable dangers abroad; that he has brought him home to us in safety; that he has made him the instrument of that peace that we find is at length brought about, wherein he is returned to us a greater conqueror than if he had routed and destroyed never so potent armies of our enemies in the field. We have reason to understand the matter so. By prevailing in war, he had only conquered by force; by prevailing for peace, he has conquered by wisdom and goodness. By prevailing in war, he had only conquered the bodily power of our enemies, or their baser part; by prevailing for peace, he has conquered their minds. By prevailing in war, he had brought about the good only of one side; by prevailing for peace, he has brought about the real benefit of both sides,—a far more diffusive blessing. By prevailing in war, he had conquered enemies; by prevailing for peace, he has conquered enmity itself. By prevailing in war, he had overcome other men; but in prevailing for peace, considering his martial spirit and his high provocations, he has done a far greater thing,—he has conquered himself, whom none ever conquered before.

Besides what this great blessing of peace generally considered contains in itself, we ought to amplify it to ourselves,—being brought about by such means, wherein we have so particular a concern. This ought to add with us a very grateful relish to it. For it is a glory to our nation that God has set a prince on the English throne that could signify so much to the world: the beams of that glory God hath cast on him, reflect and shine upon his people. To be made the head among other nations, and not the tail,—God hath in his word taught us not to count it an inconsiderable thing. And it is our more peculiar glory that our king is renowned, not by throwing death and destruction everywhere round about him, but by spreading the benefits included in peace through the neighbouring nations; and his return to us, leaving the rest

of Europe only to lament that they all live not under his government. I pray God he may meet with no ungrateful returns: and that none may be so ill-minded as to grudge at power so lodged as to save us, who were less concerned at its being lodged where it could only be designed to destroy us. In the meantime, it might excite us to the higher pitches of thankfulness to Almighty God for this blessing of the present peace, if we did consider both what it hath cost, and whereto it is improvable. But the former consideration I shall not insist upon, lest any should make an undue use of it; and the latter I leave to the following head, which we are next to proceed to,—

2. To show what matter of supplication remains to us upon the latter account; that is, with reference to such things as are yet wanting to make this blessing of peace a complete blessing, and without which it cannot be understood to be such but we may be left at last a most miserable people,—and so much the more miserable by how much the higher favours we have to account for, that, not being improved, must have been thrown away upon us. The mercies included in the peace will be unimproved and lost without the mentioned additions; whereof all the several heads that were recited belong to one, namely, that of spiritual blessing. *That* therefore, in the general, we have to pray for; that God may be said to bless us indeed, to bless us in blessing us; namely, that he would "bless us with spiritual blessings, in the heavenlies" (that is, in heavenly things, or from the heavenly places) "in Christ Jesus."[1]

Let us I pray you, learn to distinguish between a self-desirable good, that in its own nature is such,—so immutably and invariably that it can never degenerate or cease to be such,—and what is only such by accident, and in some circumstances may be much otherwise.

Spiritual good, that of the mind and spirit, and which makes that better, especially that which accompanies salvation;[2] that runs into eternity, and goes with us into the

[1] As Eph. i. 3.

[2] Heb. vi. 9.

other world; is of the former sort. External good is but *res media*, capable of being to us sometimes good and sometimes evil, as the case may alter. Blessings of this kind may become curses: "I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already."[1] A man's table may become his snare; and that which was for his welfare, a trap.[2] Merely external blessings are curses, when they become the fuel of lusts, when they animate men unto contests against heaven, rebellions against the Divine government,—when, like Jeshurun, men wax fat by them, and kick against heaven.[3] This we are always liable to till spiritual blessings intermingle with our other blessings; and nothing should more convince the world that the kindest and most benign part of the Dvine government lies in immediate influences on the minds of men, and that consequently, their own felicity depends thereon. Let all things that can be imagined concur in the kind of external good, and they can never make him a happy man that has an ill mind; he will always be his own hell, and carry that about with him wheresoever he goes; he will be a constant spring and fountain of misery to himself; misery and he cannot be separated from one another: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;" but he will be always "a troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."[4] The philosophy of pagans would have made them ashamed to place their felicity in any thing without or foreign to themselves.

But we are Christians, and shall we not much more be ashamed to take other, or even opposite, measures of blessedness, to those which are given us by our divine Master? To be poor in spirit, upon just accounts mourners, meek, hungry and thirsty after righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, to submit to be persecuted for righteousness' sake, *these* are his characters of a blessed man; and he places that blessedness itself in congenerous things.[5]

Let us learn from him, and collect that nothing but wickedness can make us miserable. What an overflowing

[1] Mal. ii. 2. [2] Ps. lxix. 22. [3] Deut. xxxii. 15.
[4] Isa. lvii. 20, 21. [5] Matt. v. 3—5, etc.

deluge have we in view, tending to subvert our religion and our civil state together! nor have we another effectual remedy in view but the Spirit of God, if he will vouchsafe to pour it forth. The great enemy of mankind is come in upon us like a flood, and only "the Spirit of the Lord" can "lift up a standard against him."[1] The Spirit of the Lord would be to us as a purifying flame, to burn up our filthiness, and enkindle in us that divine love that would make us zealous of good works. And this should be with us the matter of earnest and incessant supplication; not with diffidence, for "he will give his Spirit to them that ask him;"[2] nor with diminishing thoughts of the necessity and value of the gift;—take heed of that, for that were to be miserable and undone by a principle; to be misled by a profane, false judgment, into the contempt of the most highly valuable things that are most necessary to our true welfare; and which are all contained in the gift of the Spirit, as you may see by comparing Matt. vii. 11, and Luke xi. 13, with one another. In the one place it is said, "he will give good things to them that ask him;" in the other place it is said, "his Spirit:" implying that the gift of the Spirit involves in it all good things. And certainly, nothing can be good to any man till he hath that Spirit that makes him good. And we are greatly concerned to supplicate mightily for the effusion of that blessed Spirit for these two purposes especially: first, that there may be a larger diffusion amongst us of vital religion, whereby we shall be at peace with God: secondly, that Christian love may more abound; whereby Christians may be composed to mutual peace, and more disposed to mutual communion with one another:—

i. That there may be a larger diffusion of vital religion, wherein stands indeed their being at peace with God; when there is a mutual *amplexus* between him and them, mind touching mind, and spirit spirit; when he does by his Spirit embrace the spirits of men, and infuse light and life into them, and adapt and suit them for his communion. To this

[1] Isa. lix. 19. [2] Luke xi. 13.

purpose we have great cause to beg and supplicate earnestly for a greater pouring forth of his Spirit, that this living religion may spread amongst us; for we appear to be under a doom, while it does not so, that "seeing we should see, and not perceive," etc.[1] Oh the fearful guilt incurred one Lord's day after another! When great assemblies meet together, multitudes are besought and supplicated that they would be reconciled to God, but too few listen,—peace with God, seems not a valuable thing with us,—his favour, in which is life, is little set by; when with many a one a treaty is continued in order to peace through many years,—seven, ten, twenty, thirty, nay forty years,—and yet this treaty brings not about a peace at last, but they stand out still hardened in their impenitency, infidelity, obstinacy, enmity against God and his Christ, through the power and dominion that an earthly, vain, carnal mind has in them and over them; what can our peace with men signify in this case? What! do we not know that the friendship of this world is enmity against God?[2] and that it is as impossible for a man to be a sincere lover of God and an over-intense lover of this world as to have two Gods; that is, two supreme powers to govern him, two supreme goods to satisfy him? This must breed a perpetual war, till the case alters between thee and him that made thee; and "woe to him that strives with his Maker!" To have the wrath of God, armed with omnipotency, engaged against thee, and yet that thou shouldst not covet peace, that yet thou shouldst not cry for peace! To have the peace-making blood of thy Redeemer crying to thee * in vain,* 'Oh, be at peace with God!' to have him that shed it thus bespeaking thee, 'I am ready to do the part of a days-man; I have died upon the cross that I might do so, that I might effect and bring about a peace between God and thee; I am ready to mediate, make use of me; I will undertake on God's part that he shall pardon thee, that he shall forgive thee, and let the controversy fall, if yet thy heart on thy part will yield, melt, and relent, and thou cry for mercy!' He came with

[1] Isa. vi. 9. [2] James iv. 4; 1 John ii. 15.

this design into this world; the proclamation of angels at his coming spake his design: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good-will toward men." Shall not all this be believed? or shall men pretend to believe it, and not consider it, or not look upon it as a considerable thing?

ii. And there is as much need, too, that we supplicate for this Spirit as a Spirit of mutual love among Christians, to reconcile them to one another: which, indeed, is also but to Christianize them, to make vital religion take place with them; for that same Spirit of Christ which animates his body, and makes them his living members, makes them such to one another. And the matter speaks itself: that opposite spirit unto truly Christian peace and love, which appears amongst us, nothing but the Spirit of Christ can overcome; we are not to expect a cure of our distempers in this kind, but by the pouring forth of this blessed Spirit. And if there be not a cure, we are certainly to expect the pouring forth of his wrath; and things look with a threatening aspect upon us to this purpose. Now that opportunity is so inviting, God's call so loud, and the way so plain; that yet an indisposition to peace should be so obstinate, that breaches should be kept open by trifles and unaccountable things of which no man of sense can pretend to give an account; that there is strife too manifestly not from the love of truth, whereof not one hair needs be lost, (nor of any other valuable thing), but merely from the love of strife; when, as to the most material and important truths men are agreed, but would seem to disagree,—they mean the same things, but impute to one another a different meaning, and pretend to know the others' mind better than themselves, that on that pretence they may quarrel with them;—all this looks fatally. And our unjust angers at one another are too expressive of God's just anger with us all, that his good Spirit, that Spirit of love, peace, kindness, benignity is so notoriously resisted, vexed, grieved, and despited by us. And the consequences are likely for some time to be very dismal; though when God hath proceeded in a way of punitive animadversion so far as he shall judge

necessary for the vindication of his own name and the honour of our religion, so scandalously misrepresented to the world, it will be easy for him by one victorious effort of that Spirit to reduce the Christian church to its original genuine temper, and make it shine again in its own native light and lustre. But, in the meantime, I cannot see that there is greater need of an overpowering influence of the Holy Ghost to draw men into union with Christ, and thereby to bring back apostate souls to God, or to work in them faith and repentance, than to bring them into union upon Christian terms with one another; or that the love of this world, or any the most ignominious sensual lust or vice, (drunkenness, gluttony, or any other,) are more hardly or more rarely overcome than the envy, wrath, malice, which Christians ordinarily are not at all shy of expressing towards one another.

I speak upon some experience, lamenting that having this occasion, (which sense of duty will not let me balk,) I have also so much cause to mention that foregoing observation. For I cannot forget, that sometime discoursing with some very noted persons about the business of union among Christians, it hath been freely granted me that there was not so much as a principle left (among those the discourse had reference to) upon which to disagree; and yet the same fixed aversion to union continued as before;—as a plain proof they were not principles but ends we were still to differ for. In this case, what but the power of an Almighty Spirit can overcome? To quote texts of Scripture upon such occasions signifies nothing, even to those who profess a veneration for those holy oracles of God. Let such places be mentioned as are expressly directed against division, wrath, strife, slandering or backbiting one another, and they avail no more than if the vice were the virtue, or the virtue the vice; no more than if it were a command to Christians to malign, to traduce, to backbite one another. To urge so plain and numerous scriptures in these cases, it is to as little purpose as to oppose one's breath to a storm; it is the same thing as if all scriptures, that had any aspect or look this way, were quite put

out of the canon; and all this, with men zealous for the Divine authority of the Scripture! And indeed it is come to that pass, as to look like a jest to expect that any man should be swayed by Scripture, or the most convincing reason agreeable thereto, against his own passions or humour, or against the supposed, though never so grossly mistaken, interest of his party.

Nor is it mere peace that is to be aimed at, but free, mutual Christian communion with all such as do hold the Head, Christ. As peace between nations infers commerce, so among Christian churches it ought to infer a fellowship in acts of worship. I wish there were no cause to say this is declined, when no pretence is left against it but false accusation, none but what must be supported by lying and calumny. Too many are busy at inventing of that which is nowhere to be found, that exists not in the nature of things, that they may have a colour for continued distance. And is not this to fly in the face of the authority under which we live; that is, the ruling power of the kingdom of Christ, the Prince of Peace? It is strange they are not ashamed to be called Christians, that they do not discard and abandon the name, that can allow themselves in such things! And it is here to be noted that it is quite another thing, what is in itself true or false, right or wrong; and what is to be a measure or boundary of Christian communion. Are we yet to learn that Christian communion is not amongst men that are perfect, but that are labouring under manifold imperfections, both in knowledge and holiness? And whatsoever mistake in judgment or obliquity in practice can consist with holding the Head, ought to consist also with being of the same Christian communion; not the same locally, which is impossible, but the same occasionally, as any providence invites at this or that time, and mentally in heart and spirit at all times. And to such peace (and consequently communion) we are all called in one body.[1] We are expressly required to receive one another, (which cannot but mean into each other's com-

[1] Col. iii. 15.

munion,) and "not to doubtful disputations."[1] If any be thought to be "weak," and thereupon to differ from us in some other sentiments, if the difference consist with holding the Head, they are not, because they are weak, to be refused communion, but "received"; and received because the Lord has received them.[2] All that we should think Christ has received into his communion, we ought to receive into ours.[3] Scriptures are so express to this purpose that nothing can be more.

And indeed, to make new boundaries of Christian communion, is to make a new Christianity and a new gospel, and new rules of Christ's kingdom by which to distinguish subjects and rebels, and in effect to dethrone him, to rival him in his highest prerogative; namely the establishing the terms of life and death for men living under his gospel. It is to confine salvation, in the means of it, to such or such a party, such a church, arbitrarily distinguished from the rest of Christians: as if the privileges of his kingdom belonged to a part only; and that, for instance, the *Lord's* table were to lose its name, and be no longer so called, but the table of this or that church, constituted by rules of their own devising; for if it be the Lord's table, they are to keep it free to be approached upon the Lord's terms, and not their own. In the meantime, what higher invasion can there be of Christ's rights? And since the Christian church became so over-wise, above what is written, in framing new doctrines and rules of worship, how miserably it hath languished and been torn in pieces, they cannot be ignorant who have read anything of the history of it.

And indeed there is not a difference to be found amongst them that hold the Head, but must be so minute that it cannot be a pretence for refusing communion: for true Christian charity will at least resolve it into weakness. And men are generally so kind to themselves, that he from whom another differs, will be very apt to think himself the stronger; then does the rule conclude him, 'You that are strong bear

[1] Rom. xiv. 1. [2] Ver. 3. [3] Rom. xv. 7.

the infirmities of the weak, and do not dispute with them, but receive them.' This obligation immediately lies on the strong, and therefore must take hold of them that think themselves so, not to dispute with the others, but receive them; because the Lord has received them. Does he take them into his communion, and will not you take them into yours? To profess want of charity in excuse, is to excuse a fault by a wickedness; it is to usurp Christ's judgment-seat, and invade his office.[1] Therefore wheresoever there is any such case to be found, that, let a man be never so sound in the faith, never so orthodox, let him be in all things else never so regular through his whole conversation,—if he do not submit to some doubtful thing, thought perhaps a matter of indifferency on the one side, and unlawful on the other,—this person must be excluded Christian communion, for no other known pretence but only that he presumed to doubt somewhat in the imposed terms; for this very doubt he is to be treated as a heathen or publican, or indeed no more to be received into our communion than a dog or a swine;—how will this be justified at Christ's tribunal? But how much less justifiable is it, if not only communion be refused, but ruin designed, to such as differ from us about those our arbitrary additions to Christ's rules, and boundaries of Christian communion? And scarce can very serious persons, even in so serious a matter, forbear to smile, when they see them that have done so much harm to their fellow-Christians attempt to justify it, only in effect from their having *power* to do it; which would as well justify any thing, since no man does what he could not do!

Nor yet do I look upon this proneness to innovate and devise other terms of Christian communion than Christ hath himself appointed, as the peculiar character of a party, but as a symptom of the diseased state of the Christian church, too plainly appearing in all parties: as I also reckon it too low and narrow a design, to aim at a oneness of communion among Christians of this and that single party and persua-

[1] Rom. xiv. 4, 10.

sion; which would but make so much the larger *ulcus* and *tumor*, a greater unnatural *apostem* or secession, in the sacred body of our blessed Lord. Nothing in this kind can be a design worthy of a Christian or suitable to the Spirit of Christ, but to have Christian communion extended and limited according to the extent and limits of visibly serious and vital Christianity. And hereof that distinguishing judgment which is necessary, is as little difficult as, in private conversation, between a visible friend and a visible enemy; or in public and political, between a visible subject and a visible rebel. So far as a discrimination *can*, and according to Christ's rules (not our own unbounded fancies) *ought*, to be made, any serious, living Christian of whatsoever party or denomination I ought to communicate with; as such, and with only such. For living Christians to sever from one another, or to mingle with the dead, is an equal transgression; nor must our judgment of any such case be guided by mere charity, but must guide; it being itself guided by the known laws of Christ.

To sum up all: then shall we be in happy circumstances, when once we shall have learned to distinguish between the essentials of Christianity and accidental appendages, and between accidents of Christ's appointing and of our devising; and to dread affixing of our own devices to so sacred an institution,—much more when every truth or duty contained in the *Bible* cannot be counted essential or necessary: when we shall have learnt not only not to add inventions of our own to that sacred frame, but much more not to presume to insert them into the order of essentials or necessaries, and treat men as no Christians for wanting them: when the gospel shall have its liberty to the utmost ends of the earth: when the regenerating Spirit shall go forth with it, and propagate a Divine and Godlike nature everywhere among men: when regeneration shall be understood to signify the communicating of such a nature and such dispositions to men: when the weight of such words comes to be appre-

hended, "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death:"[1] when to be born of God ceases to signify with us being proselyted to this or that church, formed and distinguished by human device: when religious pretences cease to serve political purposes: when the interest of a party ceases to weigh more with us than the whole Christian interest: when sincerity shall be thought the noblest embellishment of a Christian: when "the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them: and the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den; they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea:"[2]—then will our "peace be as a river, and our righteousness as the waves of the sea;"[3] and the glorious Lord will himself be to us a place of broad waters;[4] where straits, and rocks, and shelves, shall no more affright or endanger us. But if these things take no place with us, then have we cause to apprehend that "the things of our peace are yet hid from our eyes."

[1] 1 John iii. 14. [2] Isa. xi. 6—9. [3] Isa. xlviii. 18.
[4] Chap. xxxiii. 21.

A SERMON

FOR THE

REFORMATION OF MANNERS.

PREACHED, FEBRUARY 14TH, 1698.

A SERMON FOR THE REFORMATION OF MANNERS.

ROMANS xiii. 4.

"FOR HE IS THE MINISTER OF GOD TO THEE FOR GOOD."

THE temper of this our present assembly ought to be not only serious, but also mournful; for the occasion it hath reference to is both very important and most deplorable, and requires to be attended to, as with very intense consideration, so with deep sorrow. Even "rivers of waters" running down our eyes, as the words are,[1] could not more than equal the sadness of the case; that is, the same *there* mentioned,—because men (as is meant by the indefinite 'they') kept not God's law: that there should be such disorders in the intellectual world; that reasonable creatures should be so degenerate, that it is become hardly accountable why they are called so! They are said to be constituted and distinguished by reason, but disdain to be governed by it; accounting their senses and their vices, their better and wiser directors.

With us the case is yet worse;—that in a Christian city and kingdom, the insolencies of wickedness are so high, tumultuate at such a rate, and so daringly assault heaven; that the rigour of laws, the severity of penalties, the vigilancy and justice of magistrates, with the vigorous assisting diligence of all good men in their several stations, are more necessary than sufficient to repress them.

The same considerations that should excite our zeal, ought also to influence our grief; and the more apparently neces-

[1] Ps. cxix. 136.

sary it is that all possible endeavours be used for redress, and the stronger and more convictive arguments can be brought to evince it, the deeper sense we ought to have of the evils that create this necessity, and the more feelingly we should lament them.

And if this be the temper of this assembly and of all other upon this occasion; this would give us measures, and set us right, as to the whole business of such a season. Nobody will then think it should be the business of the sermon to please curious ears; or of the hearers to criticise upon the sermon; or that it ought to be my present business to compliment the worthy persons that have associated on this account, how laudable soever their undertaking is: but it will be the common agreed business of us all, to take to heart the sad exigency of the case, to be suitably affected with it, and quickened to what shall appear to be our duty, in reference thereto.

And though the words I have read, do more directly respect the part and office of rulers; yet since there is that relation between them that govern and those that are under government, that the duty of the one will plainly imply and connote the duty of the other; I shall so consider the words as they may have a direct or collateral reference to all sorts of hearers, and do point out the duty, as well of them that live under government, as of them that govern.

We are therefore to take notice, that the text admits either of an absolute consideration, or a relative.

Absolutely considered, it is an assertion.

Relatively, it is an argument; as the introductive particle, 'for,' shows.

First. For the absolute consideration of the words, as they are an assertion, we are to see what they assert. The person spoken of under the term *He*, is any ruler, supreme or subordinate; as in that parallel text, which we may take for a comment upon this, is expressed:[1] "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether to the

[1] 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14.

king as supreme, or to governors sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well." The words ἐξουσίαι and ἄρχοντες, used in this context, admit of the same extent. So, among others, that great man Grotius understands this place also, not only of kings and princes, but whosoever are the *tutores status publici*, (borrowing that expression from Seneca,) any that are to take care of the public state, by whatsoever name they are designed: indefinitely, any magistrate whatsoever.

That which is said of such a one, contains an account of the *original* and the *end* of his office and power.

The original of it,—that he is the minister of God; which signifies he is, as such, to act only by His authority, derived from Him.[1] There is no power but from God, and the powers that be, are ordained of God: which also implies, that such power is to be used for God, and that consequently God is to be the ruler's first and last; and he is to be subordinate to God, both as his principle and end. Acting by His authority, he is by consequence to act for His interest; His minister or servant is to serve him.

But besides what is thus implied of the general and ultimate end of the magistrate's power, in what is more directly said of the original of it; we have also a more explicit account of

The end of it; namely, the next and more particular end, which is twofold: the end for *whom*, indefinitely expressed, 'for thee,' that is for every, or any one that lives under government; and by consequence, the whole governed community; for all the parts make up the whole. And further we have the end for *what*, namely, 'for good,' the good of each individual, and of the whole community as comprehending all the individuals. Thus we see what the words contain absolutely considered, as they are an assertion.

Secondly. We are to consider them relatively, as they are an argument. So the particle, for, shows their relation, and

[1] Verse I.

directs us backward, where we shall see what they argue; and we find they are brought in to enforce the duty before enjoined, which is twofold.

Primary, and more principal: consequential, deduced from the former.

I. The primary duty is that: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers," or to the powers that are above us.[1] Some blame the comparative expression, *sublimioribus*, 'higher;' for which there is no pretence from the word ὑπερεχούσαις, that only signifies the powers mentioned, to be over us, whether in a higher or lower degree. Let them be less or more above us, we are to be subject to them.

II. The subsequent duty is double:

1. That they are not to be resisted. A doctrine which, from the terms of the context, is capable of being so stated as neither to be just matter of reproach or scandal to the wise and good, nor of sport and laughter to another sort of men. But that is not my present business.

2. That they are not to be unduly dreaded, or apprehended as a terror; that is, not otherwise than (in the design of their appointment) they are so; namely, to evil works, and the workers of them, not to the good.[2] A fear of reverence is indeed due from all to their character, and the dignity of their station; a filial fear, that of children, for they are the fathers of their country; not a servile, or that of slaves, except from such as are so,—evil doers, who are slaves of the vilest and more ignoble sort, to their own lusts; that enslave their minds, which might otherwise enjoy the most generous liberty, under the meanest and more oppressive external servitude.

The text, according to its immediate reference, is but an amplification of the reason alleged, why the magistrate is not to be looked upon with terror and affright by any but such as resolve upon a profligately wicked course of life, not by such as intend only a course of well-doing. For if thou be such, he is the minister of God to thee for good; his sword is

[1] Verse 1. [2] Verse 3.

only formidable when it fetches its blow from above, when it is "bathed in heaven," as we may borrow the words;[1] when it is wielded according to Divine appointment, and God and he concur in the same stroke. When it is otherwise, it is true that the fallible or unrighteous human ruler may for well-doing afflict thee, and therein do thee wrong; but he can do thee no hurt, even though the stroke were mortal,[2] for our Lord forbids the fear of what is no worse; so said Socrates of them that persecuted him to death: 'They can kill me, but cannot hurt me.' "Who is he that can harm you" (saith a great apostle) "if ye be followers of that which is good?"[3] And it is added,[4] "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye." And hath any man reason to be afraid of being happy?

But though this be the more immediate reference of these words, "He is the minister of God to thee for good," and is therefore not to be unduly feared, they do yet ultimately and more principally respect the grand precept first laid down,—of being *subject* to the powers over us: which is evident, for that upon this very ground, and the intervening considerations which further illustrate it, this same precept is resumed, and pressed upon conscience, and a necessity is put upon it, on the same account; namely, that because the magistrate is the minister of God for good, and is to be a terror to evil-doers, and hath a sword put into his hands for that purpose, which he is not to bear in vain, but must be the minister of God in this kind; namely, as a revenger, to execute wrath upon such as do evil; that therefore we must needs be subject, and that not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

This is therefore the principal relation of these words; namely, as an argument to prove that he, the magistrate, is the minister of God to us for good; that therefore we ought not only not to resist him, when he is doing his duty, nor be afraid of him when we are but doing ours; but that we also ought to be subject to him, and that,

[1] Isa. xxxiv. 5. [2] Luke xii. 4. [3] 1 Pet. iii. 13. [4] Verse 14.

not only that we may escape wrath, but that we may satisfy conscience.

This is therefore the relation, according whereto we shall consider these words; namely, as they are an argument to enforce the required subjection:—

Which subjection that we may the more fully apprehend, it will be requisite with the more care to consider the propriety of the word used to express it. It is a word that carries order, τάξις, in the bowels of it.[1] And with the preposition ὑπὸ, it signifies order under another, as of inferiors under superiors; it imports therefore not to be subject only, but subordinate and subservient. And the form wherein it is here used, admitting of its being taken not strictly in the passive sense, but in the middle,—whereupon it may be indifferently capable of being rendered actively; namely, 'not only be subordinate, but by your own act, and with your own design, subordinate yourselves to the magistrate, come into order under him, as he is God's minister, invested by him with power for such and such purposes,'—this, without straining, carries the sense yet higher.

And whereas τάξις is a word of known military import and signifies the order of an army formed for battle, wherein every one knows his own rank, place and station; it is as if it were said, Take your place, come into rank, that you may, under the commander's conduct, *in acie stare*, stand in order of battle; as the word ἀντιτάσσεσθαι, rendered to resist the ruler, is *ex adverso in acie stare*, to stand in rank or in *battalia* against him. You are not only not to resist, but you are to assist, and in your place and station stand by him, whom God hath deputed to be His minister; as he is to promote common good, and be a terror to them that do evil. This was the just claim and demand of that excellent prince: "Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers, and stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?"[2]

This according to lexicographers of good note is the import of that word which we lay such weight upon;

[1] ὑποτασσέσθω, ver. 1, and ὑποτάσσεσθαι, ver. 4. [2] Ps. xciv. 16.

and accordingly very valuable expositors understand this place.

By this time, therefore, you may see what place and order these words I pitched upon, have in the series of the apostle's discourse; and thereupon what aspect they have upon the design for which we are met; pursuant whereto, they admit of being thus summed up:—

That for this reason, and under this notion, as the magistrate is to be a terror to them that do evil, and therein God's minister for good to them over whom he is set; it belongs to every soul, or to all persons under his government, to be each one, in his station and according to his capacity, actively and with their own design, subordinate and subservient to him herein.

In speaking to this I shall show,

First. That the magistrate is God's minister, upon the mentioned account.

Secondly. That therefore such duty is incumbent upon all that live under government. The former whereof is a doctrinal proposition, the other the use of it.

First. That the magistrate is the minister of God, for the good of them over whom he is set. This we are to consider by parts.

I. That he is God's minister. Hereof none can doubt, who doubt or deny not the Being of God. His being God's minister, signifies his deriving his power from him; who else can be the fountain of power, but he who is the fountain of all being? It is true the governing power hath not been always derived the same way, but it hath been always from the same fountain. When God was pleased to have a people within a peculiar sort of inclosure, more especially appropriate to himself; he was very particular in signifying his will, concerning all material things that concerned their government.

What the form of it should be:

What persons should govern, or in what way the power and right to govern should descend and be conveyed to them:

What laws they should be governed by:

What the methods should be of governing, according to those laws.

Since it is very evident much is left to the prudence of men, always to be directed by general rules of equity, and, as these allow, by immediate interpositions of his own providence; I resolve this discourse shall be involved in no controversies, and therefore shall not determine nor go about to dispute as to what is so left, how much or how little that may be. But it is plain and indisputable that the governing power he reserves, and claims to himself; that is, not to exercise it himself immediately, in a political way; but to communicate and transmit it to them that shall; so that in what way soever it is derived to this or that person, or under whatsoever form, the conferring of it he makes his own act; as we find it said to Nebuchadnezzar: "The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom."[1] And he is told, "The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."[2]

And so much, you see, is in this context asserted to him over and over. Two things are plain in this matter:—that it is the mind of God there should be such a thing as magistracy and government in this world; and again, that men shall be governed by men, by some or other of themselves, who shall be, as the text speaks, God's ministers. As he is the original of the governing power, the administration shall be in them. And of the mind of God in both these there is sufficient indication by the very law of nature. How is it conceivable such sentiments should be so common, if they were not from a common cause? He seems to me to have determined well, (if it be considered in what way the course of nature is now continued, and by whom all things consist,) that makes the governing power to be from God, as the author of nature;[3] and that though government, as it is such and such, be *juris humani*, it is *juris divini* absolutely considered, or as it is government. It was most apparently a thing worthy of God,

[1] Dan. ii. 37. [2] Chap. iv. 32. [3] Suar. *De Leg.* lib. iii. c. 3, 4.

when he peopled this world with such a sort of creatures as man, to provide for the maintaining of common order among them; who without government were but a *turba*, a *colluvies*, as a noted heathen speaks on a different account,—a rout of men. Had man continued in unstained innocency, it is concluded on all hands there must have been a government among them; that is, not punitive or coercive, for which there could have been no occasion, but directive and conservative of superiority and inferiority; as it is also even among the angels of heaven, where are no inordinate dispositions to be repressed. Much more is government, in the severer parts of it, necessary for lapsed man on earth; the making of restrictive laws, and governing by them. And that God should design the governing of men by men, was also most agreeable to the perfections of his nature; especially his wisdom and his goodness considered in comparison to the imperfection of this our present state. When the government over Israel was a theocracy, God used the ministry of men in the management of it. That it should be his ordinary stated course to govern by voices or visions, or by frightful appearances, such as those on Mount Sinai, had been very little suitable to this our state of probation,—as his accurate wisdom we find hath determined; and was less agreeable to his benignity and goodness, which would not amazingly terrify, where he designed more gently to admonish and instruct. Hence had he regard to their frailty, who so passionately supplicated: "Let not God speak to us lest we die;" and this his compassionate goodness we are led to consider, being next to treat of the end of this his constitution; namely,

II. That the magistrate is God's minister to men, for their 'good.' Next to the sweet airs and breathings of the gospel itself, where have we a kinder or more significant discovery of God's good will to men? Here we are to stay and wonder; not to assent only, but admire! To behold the world in a revolt, the dwellers on earth in arms against heaven,—and the councils that are taken above are how to do them good! How Godlike is this! How suitable to

magnificent goodness or beneficent greatness! Being secure from hurt by their impotent attempts, and when revenge was so easy, to study not only not to harm them, nor also how they might less harm and mischief themselves, but how to do them good,—this was every way great, and most suitable to the greatness of God; wherein it falls into conjunction with so immense and absolute goodness as doth beyond what any created mind would "ask or think." This imports not implacableness or destructive design towards the generality of mankind; but great benignity even "to every soul," in as full extent as the command runs, "to be subject to the higher powers." This is, we find, another medium by which God testifies, or "leaves not himself without witness;" besides what we have elsewhere,—"That he gives men rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons."

The most compassionate eye of God beholds men under the power of vicious inclination, bent upon destructive ways. Whereas, by the course of nature which he hath fixed, he should give them ordinarily competent time,—as he hath given them "life, and breath, and all things,"[1]—that they might "seek after him," and labour to feel and find him out, they live in a contemptuous neglect of Him and are cruel to themselves; oft shorten their own time, live too fast, and make too much haste to dig their own graves and turn their habitation into a charnel-house; yea, even bury themselves alive, in stupifying sensuality and vice. He, though provoked, hastens not their destruction by sudden revenge; he animadverts not upon them by flames and thunderbolts, nor amazes them by astonishing appearances; "His terrors make them not afraid." He only clothes some, from among themselves, with his authority; who shall appear on the stage with them, as gods among men, resembling themselves in human nature, and God in power,—as they should in other Godlike excellencies, if men would so far co-operate towards their own welfare as they ought,—that by such gentler methods some stop might be put to the stream

[1] Acts xvii. 25.

and flood of miseries, wherewith otherwise unrestrained wickedness is continually ready to deluge the world.

The magistrate is herein an instrument of good and of wrath at once; these two things disagree not, to be a *minister of God for good* and to *execute wrath*. This latter is said, in conformity to vulgar apprehension, because when men afflict one another it is usually the effect of wrath; when a fixed, though most sedate and calm resolution to punish hath the same effect, this most different cause is called by the same name. In this allusion is wrath ascribed to God, the most serene and dispassionate of all beings; and hence they, who represent him among men in authority, ought in this respect to be Godlike too. *Magistratus non debet irasci;* judges (as Cicero most aptly speaks) ought to be *legum similes*, 'like the laws themselves,' which are moved by no passion, are angry with no man, but keep one steady tenor, so as neither to despite an enemy nor indulge a friend. To this temper it well agrees to design good,—as in lancing a tumour, where one does a present hurt. Two ways may punishment be a proper and apt, though it be not always an effectual means of doing good.

1. As it may work the good of the offenders themselves: to which it hath in itself a tendency,—if the disease be not so strong and stubborn as to defy the remedy,—as it puts them upon reflecting, and should awaken in them their considering powers.

As in the matter of treason against a rightful power, *deliberasse est descivisse*, 'to deliberate whether to be loyal or no, is to revolt;' so it is in the just and glorious rupture that is to be made of the bonds of vice, whereby men are held as slaves under the usurped power of the Devil's kingdom. If once they come duly to consider, they will disdain so vile a servitude; when they meet with a check in their way, it may occasion them to check themselves, and consider their ways. No external means do any good to the minds of men, otherwise than as they themselves are engaged, drawn in, and made parties, in some sense *against*, but (as we are compounded) in a higher and nobler sense *for*, ourselves. This

comes in as one among external means of that kind as do give some present uneasiness, but in order to after advantage; it afflicts, it is true, and "no affliction is for the present joyous, but grievous;" but yields afterwards a peaceable fruit. When the magistrate's power is called a sword, it signifies its business is to wound; but as wounds are generally painful, some are sanative healing wounds, and so are these designed and apt to be. They vex a while; but *vexatio dat intellectum*, it rouses the understanding; and is most apt to do so to good purpose in plain and undisputed cases, and where there is no pretence for conscience in the cause one suffers for.

Where indeed a formed and fixed judgment of conscience once hath place for the practice which exposes a man to suffering; mulcts and prisons, gibbets and fagots are very improper means of illumination or of public utility,—if the civil peace and the substance of religion be not hurt by such practice. And the sincerity of that conscience is much to be suspected, that is ever altered by such methods; but no man will pretend it is against his conscience, not to be drunk, not to debauch, or to be sober, chaste, and virtuous.

Therefore a man's way lies open to that consideration which is most immediately to influence his practice, to correct a lewd, and begin a regular, good, course. He needs not be detained with any subtle disputes or be put to solve perplexed doubts, or answer specious arguments and objections. It is obvious to him to bethink himself: 'What a strange sort of anomalous creature am I become, whom the law of mine own nature remonstrates against! How degenerate a thing! that have forsaken my own noble order of intelligent creatures, to herd with brutes! That have made myself unfit for human society, otherwise than as one that must bear a mark, wear a disgraceful scar, from the wound of a sword, not that of a public enemy or my own, but a sword drawn in defence of the sacred rights of God and to vindicate the honour of mankind!'

And hereupon, if the crime be not capital,—with the concurrent use of other appointed means and the blessing of God upon all, from whence only the good issue can be hoped for,—

may a vicious person be so reclaimed, as to become of great use in the world. Yea, and if the crime be capital,—such as that the criminal survives not the punishment, but the sword of justice must cut him off from the land of the living,—our charity will not let us doubt but there have been instances wherein a prison and arraignment and the sentence of death have been the blessed effectual means to the offenders, of their escaping the more terrible sentence and of obtaining eternal life. But however, though the ministry of civil justice doth often fail of its most desirable effects as to the particular persons that suffer it, as even the ministration of the gospel of grace proves also ineffectual to many, yet,

2. It is not only apt, but effectual to do much good to others, and generally to the community. Punishment is justly said to be, in its proper design, medicinal to the *delinquents;* yet not always in the event.[1] But the *common good* it may serve, when contumacious offenders perish under the deserved infliction of it. This was the thing designed by the righteous Judge of all the earth, when he gave so particular directions how to punish offenders in such and such kinds, that "others might hear and fear, and do no more so wickedly." And in all equal government, it is the design of penal laws that the terror might reach to all, the punishment itself but to a few. And when the utmost endeavours that can be used shall have had that happy success to reduce a vast number of offenders to a paucity, we should rejoice to see that there needed to be but few examples made in such kinds.

In the meantime, where this sword of the Lord, in the hands of his ministers of justice, is unsheathed, and used according to the exigency of the case; it is an apt and likely mean to have a happy effect for the good of the community, both as it may put a stop to the prevailing wickedness of men, and may avert, from a nation, the provoked wrath of God.

i. As it may give some check to the daringness and triumph of unrebuked wickedness; which indeed naturally carries in it a pusillanimous meanness and a vile abjection of

[1] Aquin. Sum. I. 2dæ. q. 87.

mind, so as nowhere to insult but where it meets in those who should oppose it, a timorous fainting and succumbency; it so far resembles the Devil, whose offspring it is, that being resisted it flees. When men find, that while they dare to affront the Universal Ruler and offer indignities to his throne, there are those that, clothed with his authority and bearing his character, dare to vindicate the injury; when they feel the smart and cost of open wickedness; it will no doubt become at least less open and seek closer corners. They will not long hold up the head in so hopeless and deplorate a cause, that can afford them no support, no relief to their abject sinking spirits, in suffering for it. What encouraging testimony of conscience can *they* have, that not only act from no direction of conscience, but in defiance of it? What God can they hope will reward their sufferings, which they incur by highest *contempt* of God?

And if such gross immoralities be somewhat generally redressed, as more directly fall under the magistrate's animadversion, how great a common good must it infer; inasmuch as those evils, in their own nature, tend to the detriment, decay, and ruin of a people, where they prevail!

They darken the glory of a nation;—which how great a lustre hath it cast abroad in the world, from the Romans and Spartans and other civilized people, when their sumptuary and other laws were strictly observed, that repressed undue excesses; and when temperance, frugality, industry, justice, fidelity, and consequently fortitude, and all other virtues, excelled and were conspicuous among them! It were a great thing we should have to transmit to posterity, might we see England recover its former, or arrive to the further, glory, which it is to be hoped it may acquire in these kinds!

Yea and the vices which are endeavoured to be redressed are such as not only prejudice the reputation, but the real welfare of any nation.

Profane swearing tends, gradually to take away the reverence of an oath; which, where it is lost, what becomes of human society?

And more sensual vices tend to make us an effeminate, mean-spirited, a defident, lazy, slothful, unhealthful people, useless to the glorious prince and excellent government we live under; neither fit to endure the hardships or encounter the hazards of war, nor apply ourselves to the business or undergo the labours that belong to a state of peace; and do consequently tend to infer upon us a deplorable, but unpitied poverty, and—which all will pretend to abhor—slavery at length. For they are most unfit for an ingenious, free sort of government, or to be otherwise governed than as slaves or brutes, who have learnt nothing of *self*-government; and are at the next step of being slaves to other men, who have first made themselves slaves to their own vicious inclinations. Thus are such liable to all sorts of temporal calamities and miseries in this world.

Besides what is of so far more tremendous import,—that the same vile, and stupifying lusts tend to infer an utter indisposition to comport with or attend to the glorious gospel of the blessed God; and so to ruin men's hopes for the other world, and make their case unconceivably worse, in the judgment of the great day, than theirs of Tyre or Sidon, Sodom or Gomorrah.

But how much may a just, prudent, well-tempered vigilancy and severity do towards the prevention of all this! And so much the more, by how much public animadversions shall render the things men incur punishment for, not only, in common estimate, unrighteous, but ignominious things.

That principle of shame in the nature of man, if by proper applications it were endeavoured to be wrought upon, would contribute more to the reforming a vicious world, than most other methods that have ever been tried to that purpose. It is a tender passion, of quick and most acute sense; things that are thought opprobrious have so sensible a pungency with them, that (though all tempers are not herein alike) many, that can feel little else, reckon a disgrace an unsufferable thing: and I little doubt but if punishments for grosser

vices were more attempered to this principle, they would have much more effect.

This hath been too much apprehended by the usurping god of this world: this engine he hath made it his business to turn and manage to the contrary purpose, to drive or keep serious religion out of the world; yea, to make men ashamed of being sober, temperate and regular in their conversation, lest they should also be thought religious and to have anything of the fear of God in them; and make them *debauch*, to *save*, their reputation. A plain document to such as covet to see a reformation of manners in our days, what course ought to be endeavoured in order thereto.

A great apprehension, to this purpose, that noble pagan[1] seems to have had, who, enquiring whence legislation[2] had its rise, 'From some man, or from God?' and determining, 'From God, if we will give the most righteous judgment that can be given;' doth elsewhere write to this effect: 'That Jupiter pitying the miseries of men by their indulgence to vice,—lest mankind should utterly perish, sent Mercury to implant in them, together with justice, shame, as the most effectual means to prevent the total ruin of the world.'[3]

And so inseparable is the connexion between being wicked and being miserable, that whatsoever molestation and uneasiness tends to extinguish dispositions to wickedness ought to be reckoned given with very merciful intentions.

It is no improbable discourse, which an ingenious modern writer[4] hath to this purpose, (for I pretend not to give his words, not having the book now at hand,) that though the drowning of the world was great severity to them who did then inhabit it, yet it was an act of mercy to mankind. For hereby, he reckoned, the former more luxuriant fertility of the earth was so far reduced and checked as not so spontaneously to afford nutriment to vice; that men in after time must hereby be more constrained to labour and industry, and made more considerate, and capable of serious thoughts; and that, when also they should find their time by this change of

[1] Plato. [2] De Leg. lib. 1. [3] In Protag. [4] Dr. Woodward's Essay.

the state of the world naturally contracted within narrower limits, they would be more awakened to consider and mind any overtures should be in following time made to them, in order to their attaining a better state in another world; and consequently the more susceptible of the gospel, in the proper season thereof.

If God were severe with so merciful intentions, what lies within the compass of these ministers of his justice, appointed for common good, ought certainly to be endeavoured in imitation of him whom they represent.

ii. The administration of punitive justice, when the occasion requires it, tends also to the common good; as it may contribute towards the appeasing of God's anger against a sinful people and the turning it away from them.

What may be collected from that noble instance of Phinehas's heroical zeal, upon which a raging plague was stayed, compared with the effect which Ahab's humiliation and Nineveh's repentance had, in averting temporal judgments, would signify not a little to this purpose. But I must pass to the

SECOND head of discourse proposed; namely, to argue and enforce from hence the duty incumbent upon all under government, as their several stations and capacities can admit, to be in due subordination, assisting and serviceable to the magistrate; as in executing punitive justice, he is the minister of God for good.

And this, as hath been said, is to be the USE of the former part of the discourse, which will answer the design of the apostle's discourse, and agree to the natural order of things discoursed in this context. For "the magistrate is the minister of God for good" to us, is a doctrine; and, "Let every soul be subject or subordinate to him," accordingly, an exhortation; which was at first proposed and is afterward resumed and pressed,[1] as of absolute necessity, from that doctrine.

Wherefore it is necessary that we be, or we must needs be,

[1] Verse 5.

subject. There is an *ἀνάγκη* put upon it, a cogent ineluctable necessity, arising even from hence, namely from this doctrinal assertion as it is proposed, and as it is afterward applied to this purpose: we are not to be dispensed with in the case, but we must every one do our parts in subordination to the magistrate, and that not only for wrath, but for conscience sake. We shall therefore show,

I. What duty we, who are in private capacities, are exhorted to.

II. Show the strength of the apostle's argument, as it is proposed in the text and amplified in what follows, to engage us to that duty.

I. For the duty we are exhorted to, that we may understand what it is, I shall only premise some few plain things; and then leave it to yourselves to judge and conclude what it is, and cannot but be.

1. It is plain, private persons are not to do the magistrate's part, are not to invade his office or usurp his authority; they are to act but in subordination to him, as their charge given them plainly imports.

2. They are not only not to *oppose* him: as the former would be too much, this would be too little; the arguments used to enforce it, import much more. What! because he is the "minister of God for good," and to me, am I therefore only not to oppose him? Can it be thought there should be such an apparatus of argument, to draw from it so faint and dilute an inference? Ought not every man so far to reverence God's authority as to endeavour it may not lose its design? And ought not every man to co-operate to a common good, wherein each man claims a part?

3. It is not only to save myself from *punishment*, by not doing the evil which would expose me to the stroke of the sword; for my duty I am to do, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake,—which plainly respects God and his authority and interest, which I am to obey and serve. And I am to endeavour, not only that he may not be a terror to me, as an evil-doer; but that he may be a terror to them that are such.

4. Somewhat positive is manifestly carried in the word ὑποτασσέσθαι, to subject or subordinate myself to him under this very notion, as "the minister of God for good." Is this doing nothing?

He is plainly said to be the minister of God for good under this special notion, as he is the administrator of punitive justice; namely, as he bears the sword and is to be a terror to evil-doers.

I am so to subordinate myself as that herein he may effectually serve the end of his office, and not bear the sword in vain.

Now upon all this judge you yourselves, what is it that is left to be my duty in a private capacity;—that is *less* than the magistrate's part, *more* than the mentioned negatives, and yet so much, as whereby I am to take care, to my uttermost, that he may do good in his office of punishing wickedness; so as that his doing his duty must some way depend upon my doing mine, and be the effect of it, or of theirs who are in like circumstances and so but under the same common obligation with me; so that ordinarily his duty cannot be done, without any care or concern of theirs or mine? What, I say, can it be less than to bring punishable matters under his cognizance?

Otherwise if no obligation lie upon private persons to this purpose, he will only be to punish such wickedness as he beholds with his own eyes; and then how narrow will his precinct be! What multitudes of magistrates must there then be, and what a monster thereupon would the body politic become!

But here if any man ask me the question, (because what is to be done herein, is to be done for "conscience sake,") am I bound in conscience to discover to a magistrate all the evil that I know by any man that is justly punishable by law?

To this I shall only at present say, that cases of conscience can only be with judgment resolved *in hypothesi* and with application to this or that person, when material circumstances, relating thereto, are distinctly known. I must have

clear grounds, if I will conceal such a man's punishable fault, upon which I may judge that more good is likely to be done to his soul,—that the honour of God and the public good will be more served—by the concealment than by the discovery, and the government not hurt or endangered.

But if the crime be such as is national and imports contempt of God and his laws, and in reference whereto the offender expresses more shame of the punishment than of the fault, and I will yet upon private respects to him or myself conceal it, I shall herein, while I pretend conscience in the case, cheat my conscience and not satisfy it.

And I add, in reference to this case, let any man, that would exempt his conscience from any sense of obligation to endeavour the punishment of offenders in the mentioned kinds, take great care he do not ground his concealment upon other than very peculiar grounds, or not common to him with any other man in the like case. Is it because such a one is my friend? or he may bear me a grudge? or I may lose his custom, etc.? These are things so common, that guiding myself by such measures is both to overthrow magistracy and conscience too. Upon the whole, therefore, what is ordinarily a private man's duty, in such cases, is sufficiently evident. Therefore,

II. Let us see the force of the apostle's arguings, to engage us to it.

1. That the magistrate, as he is the dispenser of punitive justice, is God's minister. It is the authority of God that he is invested with; he bears a sword which God hath put into his hand. Is that authority to be eluded, and made to signify nothing? Is that sword to be borne in vain? What an awe should this lay upon our spirits! It is therefore to be served for conscience sake, which hath principal reference to God.

We need not here dispute whether human laws bind conscience; no doubt they do, when they have an antecedent reason or goodness. If men command what God forbids, the apostles make their appeal to *enemies* as *judges*,—'Whom they

were to obey?' He is the minister of God for good, not for hurt, or for no good; it is a perverting of God's authority, to do mischief by the pretence of it; a debasing it, to trifle with it.

But the question is out of doors when human laws are but subsidiary to divine and enjoin the *same thing:* and as that celebrated saying of St. Austin is applied, by him, to the former case,—of a supposed contradiction of the proconsul's command to the emperor's,—for *disobeying* the inferior; it is equally applicable, as fortifying the obligation to *obey* both, when they are co-incident.

And this consideration can be insignificant with none but such as 'say in their hearts there is no God;' that think this world hath no universal sovereign ruler or no Lord over it: and it might as well be supposed to have no intelligent maker, to have become what it is by chance! an imagination which the most vicious, that make any use of thoughts, begin to be ashamed of; and have therefore thought fit to quit the absurd name of Atheist, for the more accountable as well as more convenient name of Deist.

But then it is strange they should not see the consequence from *maker* to *ruler*, and from God's having made this world, to its being under his present government and liable to his future judgment; or that, from any just apprehension of the nature of God, they should not collect so much of the nature of their own souls as to judge them capable of subsisting out of these bodies and in another world; and consequently of their being liable to a future judgment for what they have *been* and *done* in this! Or that a Being of so much wisdom, and goodness, in conjunction with power, as to have made such a world as this and such a creature as man in it, should not have made him for nobler ends than are attainable in this world!

If any of themselves had power enough to make such another sort of creature, and furnish him with faculties capable of such acquisitions and attainments, only to fetch a few turns in the world and form plots and projects in it, that

must with himself shortly come to nothing; they would have little cause to boast of the performance. They would have cause to be ashamed of it,—to use so inconceivable a power only to play tricks that neither themselves nor any one else should ever be the better for! And though they might, hereby, a while amuse the world, they would gain little reputation of wisdom or goodness above other men by being the authors of so useless a design, that would at length appear to have nothing of design in it; for finally it terminates in mere nothing.

But the great God hath not left himself 'without witness;' the illustrious characters of his Godhead shine everywhere. He doth insist upon and will assert his rights in this lower world; it is a part of his creation, though a meaner part; He rules in the kingdoms of men, and he that rules will judge. The jest and laughter of fools will not overturn his throne; they that have taught themselves to turn his laws and the whole frame of his government over the world into ridicule, (because it is to be hoped they do not use to laugh always,) should be advised by a wise and great man, in his time, '*then* to judge of their jest, when they have done laughing;'[1] sometime they will have done, and shall consider that he, to whom it belongs, will judge over their heads, as he will over us all.

And if his throne and government are as insolently, as they are vainly, attempted against by many, and the most connive; we shall all be taken for a combination of rebels against our rightful Lord. It will be a heavy addition to be 'partakers of other men's sins,' when every one hath more than enough of his own.

Let me ask, would you not dread to be found guilty of misprision of treason against the government under which we live? Why! doth the fear of the great God, and the dread of being found accomplices against him, signify less with us?

And what means it, that the charge of punishing great offenders is given to the community,—*Thou*, every individual,

[1] Lord Verulam's *Instaur. Mag.*

(as in the text, *thee,*) all the individuals making up the community? "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."[1] And so for the idolater: "Thou shalt bring forth that man or that woman, and stone them . . . ."[2] Is it that all the people were magistrates? no, but that it was not to be supposed that so horrid impieties could long escape unpunished, but by the people's, as well as the magistrates' neglect; upon which *all* would be taken as conspirators against the great Lord of all.

2. Take the other part of the argument: "That the magistrate is God's minister *for good" to us.* Is it enough for us not to hinder? Are we not all obliged in our stations to promote our own, our neighbours', and the common good? our own, as we keep ourselves from being accessaries: our neighbours', *(offending,)* as we contribute our endeavour that they may be less wicked, and, which we should further design, that they may become good: our *unoffending* neighbours', for if grosser wickedness rule without control, who that are pious, sober, and virtuous can long live in peace by such ill neighbours? We are for this directed to pray: "For kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may live quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty."[3] And what we are to pray for, we do that ludicrously, if we endeavour it not too: besides that the untainted as yet, are liable to worse hurt by the contagion of their example; and the common good is many ways to be served, as hath been shown. How laudable an excellency, among noble-minded pagans, was love to their country! and even in this way to serve the common good, was reckoned by them a praiseworthy thing. 'He,' saith one of them, 'that doth no harm, is honourable; but he is worthy of double honour that prevents it; and he that assists the magistrate in punishing it, is most honourable, and far excels all his other citizens:'[4] so far were they from thinking it an ignominious thing, to bring offenders to punishment, and especially for impieties or whatsoever signified a contempt of religion; such regard

[1] Exod. xxii. 18.
[2] Deut. xiii. 13, 14; chap. xvii. 2—6.
[3] 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.
[4] Plat. *De Leg.* lib. 5, *συγκολάζων τοῖς ἄρχουσι.*

they had to the honour of "their gods, who were no gods." Shall we reckon the true and living God to deserve from us less regard to his violated honour?

The *common* good, which in this way we are to promote, is *so* common, as all good men can, without scruple, concur in the design; and blessed be God, they so generally do so.

We have the greatest encouragement hereto by considering the immediate fountain of the magistrate's power and office, our glorious and ever blessed Redeemer and Lord; to whom "all power is given in heaven and earth," by whom kings reign, "who is Head of all things to the church," and through whom the Divine goodness flows towards a lost world. This infers an obligation upon all that bear the Christian name, to serve the proper ends of this branch of his power; as they have, in general, to acknowledge him for Lord and Christ.

They who therefore make it their business to promote this design, do not herein serve the interest of a party, but the interest of the Universal Ruler, of our Blessed Redeemer, and of mankind.

And they who are agreed, with sincere minds, upon so great and important an end as the serving this most comprehensive interest, are agreed in a greater thing than they can differ in. To differ about a ceremony or two, or a set of words, is but a trifle, compared with being agreed in absolute devotedness to God and Christ, and in a design, as far as in them lies, of doing good to all. An agreement in substantial godliness and Christianity, in humility, meekness, self-denial, in singleness of heart, benignity, charity, entire love to sincere Christians as such, in universal love to mankind, and in a design of doing all the good we can in the world, (notwithstanding such go under different denominations and do differ in so minute things,) is the most valuable agreement that can be among Christians.

They that are thus agreed are more one, and do less differ in the temper and complexion of their minds from one another, than *they* who are never so much agreed in being

for or against this or that external form or mode of religion, but are full of envy, wrath, malice, bitterness, falsehood, do differ from them all, and from all good men. And I doubt not, when God's time comes of favouring Zion, we shall have churches constituted by congregating what is of *one* kind,—such as, for the main, are of one mind, spirit, character, and temper,—and severing whatsoever is of a *different* kind, and quite alien hereto; and cease to have them constituted by what is unnecessary, much less by what is inconsistent with their very being. Pride, ambition, vain-glory, and a terrene spirit, with carnal self-design, will not always prevent this; heaven will grow too big for this earth; and the "powers of the world to come" for those "of this present evil world."

In the mean time, let us draw as near one another as we can, and particularly unite in the most vigorous endeavour of carrying on this excellent design which is now before us. And let it be with a temper of mind agreeing with God's kind design towards men in appointing the magistrate to be his minister to them, that is, for the *doing them good*. Let it be with minds full of all goodness, in conformity to the Original First Good, from whom, as such, this constitution proceeds. Despond not, as apprehending the stream is too strong and there is no good to be done; that is to yield the day to victorious wickedness. It is to give vice the legislature, to let it be the law of the age and govern the world; and it is to give up ourselves and our nation to perish, as a lost people. Let us not be lost, *before* we are lost.

Much good hath been done in this kind heretofore. There was a time when, at Antioch, the severity of the magistrate was much regretted, in the reign of that great prince Theodosius, and upon an ill occasion, the contemptuous subversion of his statutes. This cost Chrysostom divers orations or sermons to the people, while yet presbyter there; in one whereof he asks them: 'What hurt had the terror of the magistrate done them? It hath shaken off our sloth, made us more honest, diligent, industrious.'[1] He had told them

[1] Hom. 6, ἀνδριάντων.

above, and tells them after: 'They ought to give God thanks for it, that now there was not one drunken person or one that sang lascivious songs to be seen. Their city was become as a chaste matron, where great wantonness before did generally appear.'

Your experience hath told you much hath been done; you are still getting ground. God hath, we are to hope, effectually engaged the government in this blessed design; in subordination thereto, go on with alacrity.

Let me finally set before your eyes the instructive practice of that excellent prince Jehoshaphat in a like case,[1] when he was "bringing back the people to the Lord God of their fathers,"[2] and had set judges in the land, warning them to take heed, as being "to judge not for man, but for the Lord,"[3]—which showed they were not mere matters of *meum* and *tuum* only, they were to judge in; but matters immediately relating to the interest and honour of God, for he distinguishes the judgment of the Lord, and controversies.[4] He charges all to whom he spake, as they were severally concerned—and they were not concerned all alike—to do their work "in the fear of the Lord faithfully," and with "a perfect heart;"[5] and concludes as I do, with these words: "Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with the good."[6]

[1] 2 Chron. xix. [2] Ver. 4. [3] Ver. 6. [4] Ver. 8. [5] Ver. 9. [6] Ver. 11.

A SERMON,

PREACHED NOVEMBER 5, 1703.

TO THE READER.

This discourse was preached without any the least thought of its being made more public; and a considerable time passed afterwards, without any such intention. I thought it indeed too uncomposed, to appear in the world; but, in a matter of no worse consequence, I make no difficulty of acknowledging that I at length chose rather to follow the judgment of the many hearers that moved for this further publication, than my own. Therefore amidst much other business, and great infirmities that are sufficiently monitory to me to be unconcerned for the gratifying of curiosity in myself or in any others, I so far revised it, as very imperfect memorials would enable me.

If anywhere it be somewhat enlarged, that can be no prejudice to them that heard it; much less to them that heard it not.

That it may be of some use to direct our thanksgivings, and supplications also,—so as, without the neglect of lower and subservient mercies, they may have principal respect to blessings of the highest value,—is the serious desire and prayer of an earnest well-willer to the true prosperity of the Christian Church,

J. H.

A SERMON PREACHED NOVEMBER 5, 1703.

COLOSSIANS i. 13.

"WHO HATH DELIVERED US FROM THE POWER OF DARKNESS, AND HATH TRANSLATED US INTO THE KINGDOM OF HIS DEAR SON."

You already know that the occasion of our assembling together this day is twofold;—to commemorate some former national mercies, and deliverances from certain very considerable efforts of that power of darkness which is peculiar to the devil's kingdom: and also, to prepare for the commemoration, at the approaching season, of the much more general mercy of our common redemption, in the observation of a solemn rite belonging to the kingdom of Christ.[1] The two parts of this text give us an apt and suitable ground for each of these: for giving God thanks, for great former mercies; and preparation for that designed holy solemnity.

We begin, for the FORMER of these purposes, with the first part of the text; "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness." And that we may see how accommodate this will be to the former mentioned purpose, as comprehended within the import of this clause,—and *but* comprehended, it being of much greater latitude,—some things I must previously note to you. As,

I. That there is a kingdom manifestly implied in these

[1] It being our usual monthly season of preparation for the Lord's Supper.

words, "the power of darkness," unto which "the kingdom of God's dear Son" is opposite. And,

II. That this kingdom can be no other than the devil's kingdom, whom our Lord himself doth own to have a kingdom. "If Satan be divided against himself, how then can his kingdom stand?"[1] These are our Lord's own words, and joined, in that context, with what sufficiently intimates that kingdom to be directly opposite to his own.

III. That the distinguishing characters of these two opposite kingdoms, the kingdom of the devil, and the kingdom of God's dear Son, are darkness and light; the one is a kingdom of darkness, and the other is a kingdom of light. The devils are called the rulers of the former,—so stigmatized, "principalities, and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world."[2] Our Lord's is implied to be a kingdom of light, in the words immediately foregoing: "Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness," etc. It is a kingdom they are to inherit.[3] In its most perfect state it comprehends brightest light, purity, and glory; as the opposite kingdom, *consummate*, is utter darkness. And so are the beginnings and first principles of each. "Ye were darkness, now are light in the Lord."[4] ... Both are seen, in the unconverted and converted state; "to turn them from darkness to light," and (which shows that darkness to be Satanical) "from the power of Satan unto God;"[5] as what their inheritance is hereupon to be, the next words show,—that they may "receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified." And yet again,

IV. That the *darkness* which characterizes the devil's kingdom, includes those things that are directly opposite unto those included in the *light* which characterizes the kingdom of Christ. The light that characterizes the kingdom of Christ includes these two things, truth and holiness.

[1] Matt. xii. 26. [2] Eph. vi. 12. [3] Matt. xxv. 34. [4] Eph. v. 8. [5] Acts xxvi. 18.

These are the principal things comprehended in the notion of light, as it is characteristical of the kingdom of the Son of God. The light of *truth*, objectively revealed and subjectively received, the frame of Christian doctrine, with the knowledge and belief thereof; and the light of *holiness*, so shining in the lives of Christians, that men may see their good works.[1] Accordingly the darkness, that doth characterize the devil's kingdom, doth comprehend in it *falsehood* and *wickedness*.

It comprehends in it all *manner* of falsehood,—truth obscured and perverted, ignorance, error, deceit, "blindness of heart,"[2] a wilful overlooking of the great and most necessary truths which the souls of men are, above all other, concerned to take in and admit into their inward parts. And it comprehends wickedness in the whole *compass* of it; wickedness against God,—all manner of impiety, idolatry, blasphemy, neglect and profanation of the ordinances and institutions wherein he claims to be worshipped in the proper seasons thereof; wickedness against men,—all comprehended and summed up in their hatred of one another. "He that hateth his brother, is in darkness," even diabolical; for they who emerge and are recovered out of it, are said to have "overcome the wicked one."[3] And both these sorts of wickedness are put together: "Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."[4] And those works of darkness are said to be "chambering, wantonness, rioting, drunkenness, strife and envying." And we are warned to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them;"[5] which works are said to be "fornication, uncleanness, covetousness," (which is also said to be *idolatry*), "filthiness, foolish talking,"[6] etc., as things that bar us from any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ or of God. And Christians are therefore forbidden to "be partakers therein,"[7] because they are "light," and "children of light;"[8] and, as it is elsewhere, "of the day, not of the

[1] Matt. v. 16. [2] Eph. iv. 18. [3] 1 John ii. 11—13.
[4] Rom. xiii. 12, 13. [5] Eph. v. 11. [6] Verses 3, 4.
[7] Verse 7. [8] Verse 8.

night, nor of darkness."[1] They are of the opposite kingdom, and must walk conformably thereto. Our way being thus far plain, we go on to add,

V. That the power which the devil exerts and exercises in this darkness, is twofold; first, spiritual and internal, secondly, secular and external.

1. There is a *spiritual* power which he exercises in this darkness, acting more immediately upon the minds and spirits of men. "The god of this world blinds their minds, who believe not;"[2] and he is said to be "the spirit that works in the children of disobedience;"[3] and of the impenitent, such as have not hitherto repented and turned to God, it is said: "He leads them captive at his will."[4] And

2. There is a *secular* power which he also exerts in the midst of that darkness that he hath brought upon this world, relating, as far as he can obtain leave, to the bodies of men and their external concernments and affairs; and not only of particular persons, but of nations and kingdoms, especially where he observes any design to be more directly formed against his kingdom and interest in this world; he thereupon comes to be engaged in a more open and explicit opposition. And so, when he is the author of this or that bodily or outward affliction to a particular person, as he can obtain Divine permission,—this is an effort of his power in the midst of that darkness. Such as are rescued out of his kingdom, his design is to vex, because he cannot destroy them whom he cannot mortally touch, namely, "such as are born of God," and have a new nature by that Divine birth: "the wicked one touches them not,"[5] that is, not mortally, to make them "sin unto death."[6] But if he can however have leave to touch them in their bodies or external concernments, he will rather do that than nothing; ruin them he cannot, but he will afflict them as he can. Therefore is he said to "go about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;" which is there meant, immediately, in reference to their external concern-

[1] 1 Thess. v. 5. [2] 2 Cor. iv. 4. [3] Eph. ii. 2.
[4] 2 Tim. ii. 26. [5] 1 John v. 18. [6] Ver. 16.

ments, as will appear if you observe the context.[1] For it follows in the 9th verse, "Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." It is true, being uncertain of the event, he hath a further aim to overthrow their faith, and by his roaring to fright them out of their religion; therefore it is said: "Whom resist stedfast in the faith;" defeat his final design. But as the means to his end, when he roars like a lion against any of the servants of Christ, it is with design to bring them into the most afflicted condition he can; that so he may at least make them signify the less in that state of opposition wherein they are engaged against him in the world. So you find the imprisonment of Christ's servants imputed to Satan: "The devil shall cast some of you into prison, and ye shall have tribulation ten days,"[2]—which some understand of the ten persecutions. Whatever the devil meant, God intended their trial,—as it is there said,—and the demonstration of the victorious power of the Divine principle, their faith and His Spirit in them: "that being tried, it might be found unto praise and glory."[3] . . . And we cannot but doubt He let Job come on the stage, as His champion to combat Satan, who was the prime author of his manifold calamities; his accuser first and his persecutor afterwards. He accuseth him of want of integrity: "Doth Job fear God for nought?"[4] and at the same time complains of his own want of power to come at him: "Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?"[5] Whereupon, for the trial of Job's fidelity and patience, God puts all he had into the devil's power, his person only excepted, which as yet he must not touch; manifest therefore it is, the devil animated the Sabeans and Chaldeans to take away his oxen and asses, and to slay his servants with the edge of the sword;[6] that kindled the fire in the lower heavens, that burnt up his sheep and servants;[7] that raised the storm from the wilderness, that smote the four

[1] 1 Peter v. 8. [2] Rev. ii. 10. [3] 1 Pet. i. 7. [4] Job i. 9.
[5] Ver. 10. [6] Verses 14, 15, 17, 18. [7] Ver. 16.

corners of the house where his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking, and buried them in its ruins.[1] And we are expressly told that it was the devil, upon his enlarged licence, that smote him with those venomous boils.[2] It was the devil that bound the "daughter of Abraham eighteen years."[3] It was the devil that brought upon the Christian Church the famed ten persecutions under the pagan Roman empire, understood to be meant by the "great red dragon,"[4] whence also, he wears that very name, "The great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan."[5] ... These are some of those efforts, amidst that darkness, wherein the devil hath and uses so great power. But yet further,

VI. It is manifestly a far greater deliverance to be freed from his spiritual power and the horrid effects thereof, than from that which he may use in reference to our outward concernments. Therefore now, upon these mentioned considerations on this former part of the text, that we may apply it suitably to our present purpose, these two things are to be asserted and evinced: That to be delivered from the devil's power, in external respects, is a real and great deliverance; but that to be delivered from his power, in spiritual respects, is a much greater deliverance.

1. That to be delivered from the devil's power in external respects, either personal or national, is a real and very great deliverance. We are to look upon that deliverance which this day we more particularly commemorate,—now almost a hundred years ago,—as a defeated plot of the devil. It carries that manifest aspect with it to every eye,—a contrivance formed and designed to be executed by the subtilty and power "of the prince of the darkness of this world." I need not repeat the narrative of it, being sufficiently known to you, or may be read in our histories; but nothing can be plainer, than that here was a design and plot of hell and devils, contrived in the dark, and *so* to have been executed,—

[1] Job i. 16—19. [2] Chap. ii. 7. [3] Luke xiii. 16.
[4] Rev. xii. 3. [5] Ver. 9.

until the execution itself should have brought it to light. For what darkness, but that of hell, could have so much fire in it? so much of destructive rage and fury? And though there was hazard in the undertaking, to the instrumental actors, what did the devil care what became of them? If his main design succeeded, he had been a great gainer and glutted his ravenous appetite; if it succeeded not, but turned upon the heads of the undertakers, he had been no loser, but only less a gainer; having some prey however, to feed, but not satiate a devouring appetite, which must be eternally insatiable. And what can be more devil-like?

And what was the deliverance by which God did again signalize this very day fifteen years ago, but a repetition of the same mercy? The same in substance, though different in circumstance. It was from the same enemy,—the same *invisible* and the same *visible* enemy,—that we were preserved then, and more lately since. And what is our continued peace and quiet hitherto, but the same mercy continued, under the care and conduct of our present sovereign? It is preservation from the same enemy and from the powers of the same darkness, that we continue hitherto to enjoy.

And this mercy is not only real, but great; both in itself great, and great in respect of what it encloses and subserves. In *itself,* for it is preservation from a great enemy, the greatest in all the world: a daring one, that feared not to contend perpetually with the Almighty, and without hope of self-advantage; who loves mischief therefore for mischief's-sake, and working with mighty power, and power that works in such darkness as to us mortals is impenetrable.

And great, in respect of what it *encloses,* and is subservient unto; for it encloses the precious gospel of our Lord yet continued unto us, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the gracious communications we partake in, by and through them; and is subservient to their true and proper design. And therefore mercy of that kind ought to be looked upon as real and very great, which way soever you consider it. We should therefore take heed of being guilty of so vile

ingratitude, as not to commemorate, with a suitable impression upon our spirits, this sort of mercies, which were the foundation of the mercies we have in so long a course enjoyed; for former mercies are fundamental to later ones. The expression is very emphatical, and worthy our most serious regard, which we have in the Psalms: "For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever."[1] And how is mercy said to be "built up," but as former mercies are fundamental to later ones? Thus are the present mercies, that we enjoy this day, founded upon the mercies of former days; such as we ought joyfully and thankfully to recount with delight and praise, remembering "the years of the right hand of the Most High." But yet,

2. I must also note to you, that however we are to esteem mercies of that kind,—namely, deliverances from the external power of the prince of darkness,—real and very great mercies; we are yet to account deliverance from the spiritual power exerted in that darkness, much greater. I hope all your minds and hearts will close with me in this, as soon as you hear it,—it carrying its own light and evidence in itself. For if you do but compare the cases of them who have been all along the *authors* of those great calamities and miseries to the inhabitants of this lower world, and especially to the church of Christ in it, with theirs that have been the *sufferers* upon the most peculiar account, you cannot but say the portion and lot of the sufferers is most unspeakably rather to be chosen. We know who have been the authors of those great calamities in the world, and in the church of God in it, for many ages by-past;—the same who were to have been the authors of our intended destruction.

And in taking a view of their case, let us consider both their character and their doom; both which you may find set down together, in one place; namely, 2 Thess. ii. 10—12.

I. Their *character*, which really is enough to fright any man that is but master of his own reason, to see how and in what way they have abandoned and lost theirs; to behold men

[1] Psalm lxxxix. 2.

so stigmatized, as indeed they have marked out themselves: "They whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power;" here is the devil's power at work *in* them, the horrid cause of their stupendous dementation. The *effects* do follow, and *by* them, "in signs, and lying wonders," among all which wonders the greatest wonder is themselves; that the thing called man in them should be so metamorphosed and transformed into so brutal and diabolical a monster! so destitute of understanding, so full of malignity,—as we shall further see by and by,—"and all deceivableness of unrighteousness." So far their character is continued, and it partly further follows, interwoven with some part of their present doom; as also their final doom is both interserted and distinctly expressed. Therefore take into their character, their being under "strong delusion,"—the energy of deceit, as the Greek signifies,—"to believe a lie;" spoken indefinitely, to note that any, the most absurd figment, they can be imposed upon to believe; that "God sends" them, as belonging to their doom, we shall consider afterwards.

And we might enlarge their character by taking in from verse 3, that they are apostates, such "as were fallen away" from a state of excellency; and spoken of as one person, from their oneness in spirit and design, as a "Man of sin," a "Son of perdition" (capable of the active, as well as passive sense), and who opposes, "exalteth himself above all that is called God, sits in his temple, is worshipped as God;"[1] and the "wicked"[2] or lawless one.

This is their character that are, and have been through many centuries of years, the authors of the miseries and calamities the church of God hath suffered, and partly doth suffer and is endangered by at this day. In this their character, I shall take notice of two things. 1. Of the great infatuation that is upon their minds. 2. Of the monstrous degeneracy, not from Christianity only, but even from humanity too, that is to be found in the temper of their spirits.

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 4. [2] Ver. 8.

1. The great infatuation that is upon their minds. It appears that they are under "strong delusions," potent, efficacious ones; they are most effectually deluded. And of this I could give many instances, but shall content myself only with the mention of two. First,

That great fundamental wild conceit which they have laid at the bottom of their whole enchanted fabric,—by which one would wonder how they could hope to impose on any part of the rational world or could be imposed upon themselves;—that all the power they claim and use to the disturbance of mankind and oppression of the Christian church, they pretend to have by deputation from our blessed Lord Jesus Christ and by succession from the holy apostle Peter.

By deputation from Christ! as if they were his deputies, in doing such monstrous work as this! as if Christ had deputed them to destroy Christianity; to render it a *ridiculous* thing by their inserted fooleries, and *odious* by their barbarous cruelties! That he, who was the light of the world, should appoint them to overspread it with darkness! That he, who so freely shed his blood to redeem it, had commissioned them so copiously to shed human and Christian blood: to make even his church, the temple of the living God, a shambles and slaughter-house, and affright the rest of mankind from coming near it,—who yet could be as little safe in declining it, if they were within the reach of their arm!

What fearful havoc did they make, unprovoked, in America, as soon as they could get any footing there; destroying multitudes of (towards *them*) harmless, innocent creatures, and who, as strangers, received them with all possible kindness; even to the number of no less than forty millions, as hath been acknowledged by some of their own historians.[1] Their kings and princes were put to death, with most exquisite torture, upon the unjustifiable pretence of their being infidels; but with design to make them confess their gold and treasure, which they did but suspect they concealed.

[1] D. Barth. d. l. Casas B. of Chiap.

By these inhuman cruelties they laid waste whole fruitful countries, and turned well-peopled lands into mere deserts. And what other tendency could this have than to engage the nations of the earth against Christians, and Christianity itself, as a thing by no means to be endured in the world? And were such multitudes destroyed by Christ's direction, and to propagate the Christian faith? And what commotions, wars, and bloodshed did they introduce into that large country of Habassia, disturbing that quiet and peaceful empire,—though Christian,—only because it would not be Roman![1] And have we not reason to add the many horrid tragedies acted by them, more within our near notice, in the several parts of Europe, and in this kingdom particularly? And that all this should be pretended to be done by a power derived from Christ! in so open and contemptuous opposition to the laws and spirit of Christ! the design of his coming into this world, and the very genius and natural tendency of Christianity itself! The things *themselves* are full of black horror. But that they should be said to be done in *that* name, speaks the most monstrous impudence and infatuation! As if Christ had changed names with the devil, and laying aside that of a Saviour, had chosen to be called Abaddon or Apollyon, the common destroyer of mankind; and having changed his mind and his very nature, did now set himself to counteract and defeat the design for which he came into the world!

And that they have this power by succession from St. Peter, is as idle and absurd a pretence. If he were their predecessor, they were sure very unsuitable successors. Did he ever go before them in such work? What precepts, what footsteps of his have they followed? Did he ever claim a power to annul at his own pleasure the laws and ordinances of his Master and Lord? to amass treasures, to accumulate dignities, acquire ample revenues, to dispose of crowns and sceptres, and, as he should think fit, to dethrone or unthrone the princes and potentates of this earth?

If he had such power, what is that to them? How came

[1] Of which see Ludolphus, and at large, D. Geddes *Ethiop. Hist.*

they by it from him? Was it because he was Bishop of Rome, that therefore the assumed, usurped name, without the apostolical office and the inseparable Spirit, and spiritual power, acts, and design, could create them such? As well might the habit make a monk, or a beard a philosopher. By their fruits and works they are to be known.

Our Lord reckoned himself sufficiently to have refuted *their* vain pretence, who gloried in being Abraham's successors, by telling them, "This did not Abraham."[1]

But all their learning, wit, and sophistry will never answer what hath been written,[2] to make it highly probable that St. Peter was never at Rome, much less sat twenty-five years there. It must therefore be a "strong delusion" must make them build so mighty a fabric upon so infirm and weak a foundation. Secondly,

The other thing I shall instance in, is their worshipping a piece of bread as a deity. What a strange infatuation is that, that one cannot distinguish a piece of bread from a god, or an object of worship! And to believe this against the most irrefragable reason and common sense; and without any pretence from Scripture more plausible than it would be to say, the sun in the firmament is a god, or that a buckler, which one turns with his hand this way or that, and wherewith men defend themselves in battle, is a deity or an object of worship, because God is said in Scripture to be a "sun and a shield:" with a thousand like instances that might be given!

2. But we are to consider also, as we proposed, and as belonging to the character of these men, the monstrous degeneracy from, not Christianity only, but also from common humanity itself, that appears in the temper of their spirits.

This depends upon the former, which could not be spoken of, without some excursion into this; but they are distinct

[1] John viii. 40.

[2] In the Modest Enquiry, upon that subject,—a work, that though anonymous, the author needed not be ashamed of,—besides what hath been said by divers others.

things, and therefore the latter requires to be distinctly, but briefly touched upon. And this depravedness of their spirits is that which is unspeakably more horrid—if anything can be thought to be more so: that men, and who profess themselves Christians, could impose it upon themselves to be so barbarously bloody and cruel to every one that is not so stupidly foolish in these things as themselves, that they would destroy all the rest of mankind, (if it were in their power,) for not agreeing with them in the same sentiments; though to agree with them I must disagree with myself, and with all other men that have yet their reason and their senses left them, and the faith of Christians, in other points most essential to religion. If I will not believe that they are deputed by Christ, as the successors of St. Peter, to do what they please in secular governments and religion; if I will not believe a piece of bread ought to be worshipped as a God; I am to be tortured to death for this my disbelief! which is so horrid a transformation of a human creature, as no power of thought can frame an idea of anything more monstrous throughout the world; namely, a Christian, because he is so, must be made the common butcher of mankind; to destroy as many human lives as he can reach! For if this treatment be for this reason deserved, it ought to take place to our utmost everywhere. Whence also is to be collected, that men might, had they not been Christians, have been sociable, kind, friendly, and have lived quietly and pleasantly with one another! So that Christian religion is the *transforming* principle, and obliges men to be the destroyers of their brethren as much as in them lies; and with exquisite torment,—that of burning alive,—such as common humanity would abhor to use towards a beast! And besides, the tortures of their inquisition must be thought a thousand times worse than burning for an hour or two!

And let now this matter be impartially considered: doth it not already appear that the authors of such miseries and calamities to the rest of men, and the rest of Christians, especially such as are sincere, are in much worse case than

the poor sufferers? We cannot but judge so, on the following accounts.

i. Here is a transformation of *minds*. The minds of men, of reasonable creatures, are transformed into the most horrid things; that is, they are turned, excepting the mere human shape—and every one that understands what belongs to the human essence, easily apprehends how little mere external shape doth, to the making of a man—they are turned into ravenous wild beasts, into lions, tigers, bears, wolves, destroying and tearing in pieces whatever comes in their way! And do but consider; were it not a much more eligible thing to have the nature of man, the understanding of man,—common humanity remaining,—though the external shape were altered; than to have the shape of a man remaining, but to be in the temper of one's mind a tiger, a bear, ravaging and destroying wheresoever one goes? Such are set up as portents, prodigies, and as monitory signs; both to astonish mankind,—that the impression may be deeper and more permanent,—and thereupon to warn them seasonably to repress the beginnings of any such disposition, fearing whither it may grow; and therefore to consider with dread, how fearful a thing it is that there should be such a sort of creatures in human shape, as can take delight in tormenting them that never did or wished them harm; as with pleasure can torture others, for no other cause but merely because they take the same liberty of thought, which as a common right themselves assume; and cannot be of their opinion against common sense and the common reason of mankind, and without pretence any way. If a man were to express his sense as to this matter, in a solemn prayer to the Almighty, would he not say: 'Lord, let me rather be the most monstrous deformed creature in external shape, that ever was produced in this world; only let me have in me a *right*, nor give me up to a *reprobate*, mind!' And what can we conceive more essential to man than these two things, reason and love; and both these are abandoned and lost in those men whose character hath been given. Their reason and love do at least suffer the highest

violation, both together. They believe themselves, and would have all others believe, against the common reason and sense of men; and are become haters of mankind, otherwise than as they shall fall in with their absurd sentiments, and will be subservient to their cursed designs.

ii. We shall easily be induced to look upon the author's case as much the less eligible than the sufferer's, upon this further account; that this horrid degeneracy and depravedness of spirit is most entirely voluntary, and proceeds from their plenary consent with the devil, as an inactuating spirit in them. Such is the import of those tremendous words that would make one shrug to think of them,—"The Spirit that inworketh" (or hath energy) "in the children of disobedience."[1]

Their perfect voluntariness appears in their most complacential self-approbation under so direful a transforming change, from man, into part brute, part devil. Others feel in themselves some disaffections and distempers of spirit, which they deplore, lament, and contend against. These men "glory in their own shame," and what ought to make them a hissing[2] and reproach to the nations of the earth, they applaud them for. They "declare their sin, as Sodom," justify the prodigious deformities of their own spirits, write volumes to defend them, and put on a countenance unaccustomed to blushing; as if in good earnest they expected other men should think their cause to be good! And to what a stupendous height doth this raise the horror of their case!

But hence also it is that the devil hath that access to the inward parts, into the more secret receptacles and chambers of their souls; unto which he could have none, if their consenting will did not open him the door. Not that there is any formal bargain or contract between him and them, for his power, you find, works in darkness; but he and they agree upon the same things: so doth the devil "lead them captive at his will!"[3]

[1] Eph. ii. 2. [2] Populus mihi sibilat. [3] 2 Tim. ii. 26.

The sufferers, in the meantime, are *only* such; and as they endure evils in themselves incomparably less, they do but endure them; not being active to procure them, otherwise than by being and doing what they ought.

And so they have, in their suffering, that great matter of relief "and rejoicing, the testimony of their conscience,"[1] besides the expectation of a glorious reward; while, for the authors of their sufferings, is reserved "the blackness of darkness for ever."[2] Which leads to the consideration of

II. Their doom, (for hitherto we had chiefly considered but their character,) and this is partly present, partly final.

1. *Present.* That, for this cause "God sends them strong delusion,"[3]—not by active infusion of malignity, whereof on God's part, there was no possibility, nor on their part, any need. They have enough of their own, besides the addition of what that text notes, that their "coming is after the working of Satan, with all power."

These are a sort of men abandoned of God, delivered over to Satan, under whose conduct they have put themselves. A fearful case! They are, not by Divine commission, but permission only, left in his hands; and now, "the lusts of their father they will do."[4]

2. *Final.* "That they all might be damned . . ." A severe sentence! but justified by what went before; "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved," but struck off from the Christian religion what should make it amiable and self-recommending: and by what follows, that "they took pleasure in unrighteousness." Hence they are left of God, in order to their future damnation: not that God made any men, on purpose to damn them; but when they had contracted such guilt, by sinning against the clearest light, against the law of their own nature and against the law of Christ, they are damned, as having marked themselves out for hell and the society of devils, whose associates and subjects they were before. And if it be said of them that do evil that good may come, "their

[1] 2 Cor. i. 12. [2] Jude 13. [3] 2 Thess. ii. 11. [4] John viii. 44.

damnation is just," much more of them that love mischief for mischief's sake.

And who would not now choose the tortures of a flaming fire for an hour or two, rather than be turned into hell, to endure infernal flames for ever!

And we may add—to show how much greater this spiritual deliverance is, than deliverance from the external powers of darkness—that the fearful tragedies that these men act being by the so manifest and immediate power of the devil, he is therefore most highly gratified by having his will so far of them. Nothing could be more grateful to him than to have made them his tools, his instruments, to fill the world and the Christian church with such miseries and calamities, as they are the voluntary authors of; and hereupon they will be the subjects of his triumph and scorn at last. And here, if you would but pause a little, and consider: 'What would I not rather choose, than to be the subject of the scorn and insultation of devils!' This is the case of this very generation of men. How will the devil insult over them! 'See what fools I have made of so great a part of mankind, how ready have they been to serve me, and my most horrid designs! There is nothing that I would have them believe, be it never so absurd, but I could make them believe it; there is nothing so horrid to act, but if I bid them, they are ready to act it!' And how much the greater will the matter of their insultation be, that such could be found, even in the Christian world, that should be made to serve his vile and horrid purposes, and so render Christianity hateful to mankind! How hath the extent and growth of it, by this means, been hindered! And it can never spread, till it have another kind of representation than is given by this sort of men.

And consider that,—in opposition to what was last mentioned,—from the *spiritual* power of the devil, which he acts in this darkness, all the sincere are truly and shall be fully delivered; whereas from his *external* power they are many times not delivered. It is not ascertained to them, that they

shall not be impoverished, that they shall not be cast into prison, that they shall not be put to death; but it is certain that Satan is dethroned in their souls, and that "God will bruise him under their feet shortly;" and they shall have opportunity and ground for eternal triumph over all his power and malice.

Therefore, upon all these accounts, this must be far the more eligible deliverance; though deliverance, in the former kind, is by no means to be made light of. They that are sincere, are sure at last of a most glorious victory over the devil. They shall "overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of His testimony," not having "loved their lives unto the death." And that is certainly the most desirable course and state, that hath the most desirable and valuable end.

And according hereto should the temper of our spirits be, in reference to such deliverance from the power of darkness which we have occasion to make mention of this day. We ought to remember, with great gratitude, our preservation from those efforts of this power, wherein it is exercised with reference to the external secular concernments of particular persons and of nations, more especially our own. We have reason to bless God for that deliverance that hath been wrought out for us in that kind; and that it hath been so often repeated and so long continued. We ought to take much to heart the mercies of God herein. And although we are here met under somewhat a *distinct* character, to bear a part in the solemn thanksgivings of this day, we are not the less obliged to be very serious herein: and, however, have for our part great reason not to expect anything hard or grievous from such, differing from us, as understand religion; between whom and us there is an agreement in all the substantials thereof. We have the same articles of doctrine, the same institutions of worship, and the same rules of life, conversation, and practice towards our sovereign and fellow-subjects. And when there is so great an agreement, that which is left to be the matter of disagreement can be only

very little circumstantial things; and which they, from whom we differ, professedly call indifferent,—not tending therefore, in *themselves*, to make either better men or better Christians. And whereas some of us do not think so throughout, that disagreement is, we hope, the rather to be pardoned, both because it is *little*,—so little that there are few men of considering minds that, upon strict inquiry and comparing of thoughts, will not be found to differ in much greater things, and very consistently with most entire mutual love, or at least no design of hurt to each other,—and yet the difference is *real*, and not to be dissembled nor thrown off at pleasure; it being in no man's power, that would keep a "conscience void of offence towards God and man," to form his judgment this way or that, as he will.

And whereas there are churches abroad and at home wherewith we agree, and from which we differ in these smaller things; we are not willing quite to disjoin ourselves from either sort, in which the *substance* is visible of our common religion,—for they are in their nature and kind one and the same. Nor can we apprehend how a church or a society, formed for the purposes of religion, can be constituted and distinguished for sole communion with that and no other, by such things as are confessed on all hands to be no parts of religion, nor to have any necessary connexion with it.

The more truly catholic the communion of Christians is, it is the more truly Christian.

There is a mental communion, which is more intimate than merely local; which yet we cannot have with them with whom we judge it unlawful to have actual, local communion, if there be occasion. But one may have *both*, wheresoever the essentials of Christianity do appear, not subverted by the addition of other things that are inconsistent with any of those essentials; as the case is with them, whose black character hath been given in this discourse.

But though we are not to expect hard things from friends, we are to remember the same common enemy to them and us is still in being, and hath great power in the world; and

that "prince of darkness" that animates them, is still powerful and as full of mischief as ever. And we know not what advantages our too common iniquities may, from the justice of a righteous God, give the common enemy against us; whereupon we have no reason to be secure. If things therefore should be brought to that state, that Smithfield fires should be kindled again, so as that we shall not be delivered from *that* sort of the powers of darkness; let us labour to get into that good state as to be able to bless God, even in the midst of flames, that we are delivered from the *worst* sort of the powers of darkness; that the prince of this world is dethroned in our souls; that he is judged there. And let us labour to have that temper of mind towards such as may be the authors of those sufferings to us, that our love towards them may not be extinguished. Labour that every one of us may say from our hearts: 'Let them discover what hatred they will towards me, God forbid that I should not exercise true love towards them. If they curse me, I will bless them; if they despitefully use me, and persecute me, I will pray for them.'

But we have also the SECOND part of the text to be briefly reflected upon: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, *and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.*"

Our present limits allow us not to enlarge upon this part: and it cannot but be thought reasonable, that this occasion being monthly, and often considered, the other but annual and rarely returning, we should choose to insist more largely upon it.

But how great a privilege is this translation; and how amazing that it should be represented to us by so endearing an expression! 'Because my Son is dear to me, I will take you into his kingdom. He is not so dear to me, but I can be very well contented to make you partakers of all the blessings that his kingdom carries in it.'

And you know that there is no kingdom but what hath its particular laws, and statutes, and ordinances, and privileges belonging to it. There is one great ordinance belonging to

this kingdom of our Lord's, that we are solemnly to attend the next Lord's-day. If we look upon ourselves as not only "delivered from the power of darkness," but "translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son," this is indeed a great privilege; but there is no such privilege which hath not its duty belonging to it. We ought to consider how we shall carry the matter upon this translation: being "translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son," and being to partake in the privileges that belong to his kingdom, how shall we deport ourselves suitably hereto, with what temper of spirit?

I. With an admiring temper of spirit,—considering the state out of which we are delivered. He hath delivered us from the "power of darkness," he hath "turned us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." This is that I am sent for, saith the Apostle Paul, as a Gospel minister,[1]—"to open your eyes, and turn you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Then into what a transport should it put us, to think that we should have been under the power of the devil unto this very day, the "power of the prince of the air, that works in the children of disobedience;" that works *energetically*, as the word signifies; his work in them hath an 'energy' in it.[2] Oh, frightful thought! to have such a horrid fiend lying continually in my bosom, preying upon the very vitals of my soul, leading me captive at his will! What the devil would have me be and do, that I was and did most readily!

II. We should recount, with great thanksgiving, our admission into this kingdom. Think we, first, whence we are delivered, and then into what state we are admitted,—into the kingdom of "his dear Son!" Into what an adoring thankful frame should that put us, that our blessed God should translate us into his own Son's kingdom! You shall hereupon be so provided and cared for, as none else in the world are besides. He will watch over your spirits; your souls shall be bound up in the bundle of life; you shall have all the supports and comforts, too, that, in infinite wisdom and

[1] Acts xxvi. 18. [2] Eph. ii. 2.

love, he shall judge necessary for you in this world; and at length be brought into the "presence of the Divine glory, with exceeding joy!"

III. Consider that the particular ordinances of this kingdom of his are aptly designed for your advantage. This that we are now to prepare for, is an ordinance belonging to that kingdom. "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me," saith our Lord, "that ye may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom."[1] We are to eat and drink with him in his kingdom; and that ordinance, wherein we are to eat and drink with him, is the emblem of what is there finally designed and meant, when we are to "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God."

IV. We should consider what faith is required on our part, being come into such a kingdom and having the privileges thereof secured unto us by such a sealing ordinance. There ought to be no dubious thought of him who so kindly invites us; especially when we are, in so friendly a way, eating and drinking together.

V. It is to be considered what fidelity is required of us. We are to swear fealty to the king of this kingdom; never let it be said, we, that eat and drink at his table, "have lifted up our heel against him."

VI. With what joy should we consider our state, in our approach to such an ordinance; we are received as friends to the king's table. "Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their king."[2] "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh . . . . . lowly."[3] How infinitely condescending, when he treats such as we for his welcome guests!

And take both the parts of the text together, and they will give us this twofold hint of *use*.

1. Consider how solicitous we ought to be, till we know that we are got out of that dark and horrid kingdom, and brought into this kingdom of light and grace. When we

[1] Luke xxii. 29, 30. [2] Ps. cxlix. 2. [3] Zech. ix. 9.

know that these two kingdoms divide the world, and how fearful a thing it is to belong to the former and how desirable a thing to belong to the latter kingdom, who would not be solicitous, till he knows that he is got out of that horrid kingdom into this blissful one, and into so safe and happy a state? And how stupid negligence is it not to know or be concerned to what kingdom I belong! Dost thou not know who is thy king? Whether the "dear Son" of God, or that accursed king? I hope you will labour not long to be ignorant in a matter of so great concern, but drive it to a speedy issue.

2. With reference to both these, if you have a comfortable ground to hope that you "are delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son;" be serious in your thanksgivings, and endeavour to arrive at *greater* degrees of gratitude, that your hearts may be more warm and raised in your thanksgiving. And such thanksgivings ought to be gratefully expressed in acts of mercy to the poor and needy. "Blessed are the merciful," for they have received mercy, and shall receive it.

PREFACE TO CORBET'S SELF-EMPLOYMENT.[1]

The character of this holy servant of Christ is already given by an every way suitable hand,[2] in what part it lay open to the observation of others. His more interior portraiture, which is contained in these papers, was (as it could only be) drawn by himself.

Why it is now exposed to public view, there is no need to be scrupulously careful in giving an account. It must be acknowledged there is usually with the holiest men a modest shyness of communicating these privacies of their own souls. Their inner man doth show its own face with the more difficulty, by how much it is more beautiful, and worthy to be beheld. And so it was with this excellent person, as his inscriptions upon these papers show,—'The State of my own Soul,' and 'Notes for myself:' signifying their intended use was that of a mirror to represent himself to his own eye, not to other men's.

Yet this aversion, though great, hath not been always invincible, or such as no reasons to the contrary could oversway. What are the Psalms of David, and sundry memoirs of holy men in Scripture, that were remotest from ostentation and vain-glory, but records of the most secret dispositions and motions of the "hidden man of the heart," made public for the instruction of their own and succeeding ages? as also, the other published meditations and soliloquies of some of the

[1] One or two similar recommendatory 'Prefaces,' and other brief occasional papers of Howe, usually printed in his Works, will be found incorporated in the 'Life,' or in the Appendix to it.—*Ed.*

[2] In his funeral sermon by Mr. Baxter.

greatest worthies in the Christian church must be understood to have had the same pious design. Nor hath a generous benignity, in some heathens, permitted them to engross all to themselves, or to envy the world those pleasant sensations of their own minds which they thought might be some way instructive and useful to other men: as that renowned philosopher and emperor[1] is an instance, who scrupled not to write, and leave behind him for this purpose, twelve books concerning his own life.

The thing cannot be culpable, if the design be innocent,—which will in great part be discernible in the manner of doing it; when it is with unaffected simplicity and without studied disguise; as we commend a picture, not so much for its being specious, as that it is like the face. So have good men in giving accounts of themselves, not spared to put in the distempers and disaffections of their spirits, that are as great blemishes and deformities as a wart or mole on the face; which the *faithful* pencil must as curiously express as the greatest decencies.

However, if this publication be praiseworthy, nothing is to be arrogated to the author; as, if it be thought blameable, nothing is to be derogated. For though the work itself, (which carries its sufficient praise with it,) be owing entirely to him, or rather to the grace of God in him, the making it public is from the advice and desire of some friends, willing to impart what was once most private, for a public good.

It is but the dissection of his soul, less to be regretted by friends,—when he is now out of sight, and much more useful,—than that of his lately pained body.

And as anatomy discovers all the curious contexture of our bodily fabric, here are vivid representations of faith, love, a heavenly mind, of humility, meekness, self-denial, entire resignedness to the will of God, in their first and continued motions; with whatever parts and principles besides compose the whole frame of the new creature: as if we could perceive

[1] Marcus Antoninus.

with our eyes how the blood in a human body circulates through all the veins and arteries, how the heart beats, the spirits fly to and fro, and how each nerve, tendon, fibre, and muscle, performs its several operations. Here it may be seen how a heart touched from above works and tends thitherward; how it depresses itself in humiliation, dilates itself in love, exalts itself in praise, submits itself under chastenings; how it draws in its refreshings and succours, as there is need.

To many, who have seen so steady, uniform, and amiable a course and tenor of life, how grateful is it to behold the secret motions of those inward, latent principles, from whence all proceeded,—though some others would look no further than the advantages in external respects that accrue by it: as, though some content themselves to know by a clock the hour of the day, or partake the beneficial use of some rarer engine; the more curious, especially any that design imitation, and to compose some like thing, would be much gratified, if through some pellucid enclosure they could behold all the inward work, and observe how every wheel, spring, or movement, perform their several parts and offices towards that common use.

What is here presented, as it may be of great usefulness to all that seriously design the Christian life; so it hath a special use for such as design it not, and who think there is no such thing.

It may peculiarly serve to convince such as are willing to think as ill as they can of the calling and office of the ministry, that there are some who serve the Lord in that work, who do not study such subjects as are here exemplified, only to frame discourses of them wherewith to entertain the people for an hour; but for their own use and practice too: who live the things which they teach, and eat of the food they prepare for others; who are in good earnest, and most intent to save themselves and those who hear them, and do really venture their own souls upon the same bottom upon which they would persuade their hearers to venture theirs,

taking all possible care lest, when they preach to others, they should themselves be castaways.

The very *opinion* that we preach only for form's sake and to keep up the custom, and believe or regard not what we ourselves say, as well as the *thing itself*, is no small nor perhaps uncommon hindrance to the success of preaching at this day. It is hard to be serious in hearing, what I think he is not serious in himself who preaches it. If I apprehend he trifles, it is a great temptation to me to do so too. You may see this worthy man considered the gospel as a gospel of salvation, and not only taught, but used it accordingly. How solicitous was he to ground substantially and strongly his hope of eternal life! How warily did he feel his way; and labour to understand,—and know practically,—upon what terms he might safely appear before his Judge!

To those who do not so, this ought to be taken for a reprehensive example, and may be very directive to those who do.

That it may attain its proper ends, is the serious prayer of one desirous to promote the common salvation,

JOHN HOWE.

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